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AUTHOR Lopez-Trevino, Maria Elena
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ABSTRACT

Interviews with 60 Mexican-American female farmworkers in the Coachella Valley (California) identified their major problems, needs, and suggestions of topics to be presented in a community-based educational radio program. Two major problems identified by these women were low wages and occupational exposure to pesticides. Contrary to cultural stereotypes, most of the women were in cooperative rather than highly traditional marital relationships. This result does not support the assumption that the low socioeconomic and political status of women farmworkers is due to the traditional gender value system of the Mexican-American community. Eleven main topics were developed for the community-based radio program based on the needs, problems, and themes articulated in the interviews. The program aimed to empower women farmworkers through access to information about their rights and about community services and resources, while negating the "blaming the victim" ideology prevalent in the professional community. The 11 topics and methods of presentation are outlined. Among the topics are political, economic, and educational discrimination; available adult education programs and child care alternatives; and higher education for farmworkers' children. Due to controversy and reluctance among community professionals, the radio program was not implemented. However, unexpectedly, the Chicana interviewers involved in the project formed a women's political support group to empower and organize campesinas. Contains 80 references and the interview questionnaire. (SV)

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A RADIO MODEL: A COMMUNITY STRATEGY TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS AND NEEDS OF MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN FARMWORKERS

A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Psychology

California State University, Long Beach

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

By Maria Elena Lopez-Treviño

B.S. 1986, California State University, Fullerton

August 1989

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A RADIO MODEL: A COMMUNITY STRATEGY TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS AND NEEDS OF MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN FARMWORKERS

By

Maria Elena Lopez-Treviño

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Pat Rozee-Koker, PhD (Chair)	Psychology
Norma Chinchilla, PhD	Sociology
David Dowell, PhD	Psychology
Mily Treviño Sauceda	California Rural Legal Assistance

ACCEPTED AND APPROVED ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSITY

Dorothy Abrahamse, PhD
Acting Dean, School of Social and Behavioral Sciences

California State University, Long Beach

August 1989

ABSTRACT

A RADIO MODEL: A COMMUNITY STRATEGY TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS AND NEEDS OF MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN FARMWORKERS

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Maria Elena Lopez-Treviño

August 1989

A needs assessment was conducted to evaluate 1) what Mexican American women farmworkers considered to be their major problems and needs, and 2) what relevant topics they considered important to be presented in a community-based educational radio program. Sixty (married and single parents) women farmworkers of Mexican origin were interviewed in their homes in the Coachella Valley. Two of the major problems identified by women farmworkers were low wages and occupational exposure to pesticides. The average yearly income of the women interviewed was about $5,000. Sixty percent of the women reported having pesticide related health problems. In general, women were in cooperative rather than in highly traditional marital relationships. Overall, women perceived the development of an egalitarian relationship among couples essential. The results of this

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study do not support the assumption that the low socio-economic and political status of women farmworkers is due to the traditional gender value system of the Mexican American community. Rigid gender roles are not responsible for poverty and poor working conditions.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Mexican American women have been studied primarily from a highly Anglo ethnocentric research approach. Research findings are in general interpreted within the cultural norms of the dominant U.S. society. This pervasive "culture of disadvantage" ideology is adopted in most intervention models by social researchers (Andrade, 1982; Baca, 1982; Becerra & Zambrana, 1985).

Consequently, the detrimental impact of institutional discrimination, gender segregation, and class stratification on the socio-economic and psychological development of women of Mexican descent are not generally addressed by social scientists (Mulvey, 1988; Vasquez, 1984). Instead, individual variables are addressed in traditional research models. As such, the socio-economic and political oppression of minority women are addressed under a "blaming the victim" model.

The most prevalent proposition advanced by social scientists under the "culture of disadvantage" model to explain the low socio-economic and political status of Mexican American women is the traditional Mexican value system. The dismal social mobility characteristic of

Mexican Americans is attributed to the "ultra" attachment that presumably women and men have to the traditional Mexican gender role value system (Andrade, 1982; Baca, 1982). Cultural assimilation and acculturation are the propositions most often advanced by social scientists to promote the socio-economic and political development of the Mexican American Population.

Assimilation and Acculturation

The assimilation of the American Anglo cultural value system has been considered an important process for Mexican Americans to gain social, economic and political power. Proponents of cultural assimilation assume a conflict or discrimination-free social integration of minorities into key American institutions (Buriel, 1984).

A major issue involved in assimilation is that it fosters a homogeneous cultural value system and social structure. Vasquez (1984) notes that it is not in the best interest of the oppressed to embrace the Anglo American cultural value system since it is the system that supports the structure of the present highly segregated society. Mexican American women are discriminated against in the U.S. as a result of their ethnic background, gender and poverty.

The present low socio-economic and political status of the Mexican American community in the U.S. has been the result of a long history of institutional discrimination.

The distinctive Mestizo (mestee) features of people of Mexican descent have been persistently perceived as evidence of their inferior biological status by Anglo ethnic groups (Turner & Musick, 1985). Consequently, Mexican American individuals have been denied entrance into society's mainstream primarily because of their unique mestizo characteristics and not due to their cultural value system. Mexican American people would always be targets of discrimination regardless of their level of acculturation as long as the present Anglo racial superiority ideology is prevalent in U.S. society (Buriel, 1984).

The unique physical characteristics of the Mexican American community makes complete cultural assimilation an impossible and undesirable goal. According to Vasquez (1984), the physical characteristics of the Mexican American population do not fit the ideal model of success of the dominant society. Women of Mexican origin may internalize the stereotypes fostered by the dominant society about Mexican American people. As a result Mexican American women can learn to disdain their own physical traits and ultimately question their own identity. Cultural assimilation and in a similar fashion the process of acculturation can become a detrimental force in the socio-psychological development of the Mexican American community.

Acculturation rather than assimilation has been advocated as a more positive and tangible goal for Mexican Americans. Acculturation addresses a bilingual and bicultural identity. Buriel (1984) argues that individuals who maintain a meaningful contact with their primary culture can develop a positive identity and self concept. In turn, a positive image can allow an individual to explore the value system and cultural expectations of U.S. society without experiencing an identity crisis or "wanna be" (a brown person who wants to become white) conflict. Nevertheless, acculturation like assimilation presents a narrow alternative for social change, the focus again remains in changing the individual and not the social system.

The assumption under acculturation is that this process can facilitate the social advancement of Mexican American people. According to this point of view, highly acculturated individuals will become more successful and would have a healthier psychological identity (Ramirez, 1984). In recent studies in acculturation, first generation Mexican American students reported experiencing higher levels of acculturation stress and lower self-esteem than students in the second and third generation groups. Similar findings were reported by Salgado (1987), Mexican immigrants who scored high in ethnic loyalty had lower self-esteem levels than women in the low loyalty group. However, immigrant

women who ranked low in ethnic loyalty had a higher educational level. Salgado (1987) points out that class difference and not ethnic loyalty might explain the results obtained. Another personality variable that is studied under acculturation is perceived racial selfdiscrimination.

Perceived self-discrimination among Mexican American immigrants has been studied under the acculturation rubric. The assumption under this postulate is that

> perceived racial self-discrimination is a dimension which has not previously been investigated as a possible source of potential stress. The hypothesis is that individuals, especially immigrants, may believe that because of their ethnic background they are being discriminated against and/or taken advantage of, without having any evidence of this in actuality. (Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado 1987, p. 208).

There is ample empirical evidence strongly suggesting that Mexican immigrants are in fact discriminated against in the U.S. because of their ethnic background. The acculturation model of perceived discrimination suggests that the lack of political and economic power of both Mexican immigrants and of Mexican Americans is not an objective and measurable social variable, but rather a mere psychological problem.

Research in acculturation does not address the negative impact that structural factors have in the socio-psychological development of the Mexican American population. The research centers assess internal personality variables such as locus of control or perceived discrimination as

indicators of cultural adaptation or adjustment (Mendoza, 1984). As such, acculturation investigates intrapersonal variables involved in cultural adjustment while ignoring the impact of major contextual factors such as institutional discrimination.

The acculturation model ignores the vast body of evidence suggesting considerable social and economic discrimination against Mexican Americans in this country. In the past decade the educational achievement of the Latin (any individual from Mexico, Central or South America) population has improved but remains below the national norm. In 1984, according to census data Latin women had 11.4 years of school in comparison to 12.6 years of school attainment by the total female population (Women's Bureau, 1985). The educational level of Mexican immigrants is very low, approximately 75% of males and females have attained only primary school education (Guendelman, 1987). It is estimated that the cost for being Mexican American in the labor market is about $1,012 and for Blacks around $1,399 (Verdugo, & Turner, 1985). The above data indicates that despite the fact that Mexican Americans have a higher acculturation level than Mexican immigrants, they still earn substantially less and have a lower educational attainment than the white population.

Comparative data indicates that Mexican Americans have a higher death rate than non-Hispanics but lower than Blacks. Infant mortality is high as is mortality from diabetes. There are indications that diabetes is a genetic tendency for Mexican Americans. Other data indicate that Mexican Americans have higher incidence of serious illnesses, work related injuries and higher death rates than the general population (Angel, 1985). The health status of Mexican Americans appears to be considerably lower than that of the general population.

The above data suggests that Mexican Americans live in the U.S. as a Third World population by not having access to vital educational, economic and health resources. Instead of pointing out major contextual variables, social researchers insist in addressing personality variables, such as level of assimilation or acculturation, as the major factors that contribute to the low socio-economic and political mobility of Mexican Americans. As such, social scientists ignore addressing the contextual factors responsible for maintaining the Mexican American community in a Third World status.

Ideal American Family System Bias

According to the "culture of disadvantage" research model, Mexican American women define their role primarily within the Mexican family system. Social scientists tend to compare the values of the Mexican American community against an ideal Anglo family system model which consists of a couple having two children, one male and one female (Andrade, 1982). In contrast to this ideal family system, it appears that most Mexican American women place a high value in motherhood and males in fatherhood. Such a perspective ignores two important factors. First, the prevalence of a traditional gender role system is a universal phenomena (Baca, 1982). Second, female and male role diversity exist in both the Mexican American and Anglo American society. Mexican American women are actively involved in the labor force. Therefore, their role cannot be defined exclusively within the confines of the family system (Vasquez, 1984). Mexican American women are assuming an important role in the family system as bread winners.

As wage earners women are assuming non-traditional roles and apparently this transition is significantly breaking the traditional sex role pattern. For example, many Mexican American migrant couples develop a cooperative system in the area of decision making and income management. Moreover, males participated more in domestic work

(Guendelman, 1987). Nevertheless, regardless of level of acculturation of men and women, females report performing more household tasks than men (Hartzler & Franco, 1985).

Mexican American women's gender role attitudes vary based on acculturation and education level, according to current research findings. First and second generation Hispanic women tend to hold more traditional sex-role attitudes and to participate less in the labor force than third generation women of Mexican descent (Ortiz & Cooney, 1985). However, Salgado (1987) reports that women of Mexican origin who have a higher income and better education show a higher level of acculturation than low income and less educated women. Thus, it is not clear at this point if acculturation level or socio-economic status are responsible for the less traditional gender role attitudes held by Mexican American women.

The proposition that Mexican Americans have a high birth rate because they have a strong adherence to an ultra-motherhood and super-fatherhood role is not supported by current research. On the one hand, the birth rate among Mexican Americans is higher than the general U.S. population, 18% in contrast to 7-8% of the national birth rate (Jorgensen & Russel, 1987). However, research indicates that these birth rate differences in populations are the

result of socio-economic factors rather than differing values.

An inverse relationship has been found to exist between level of education, income, occupation labor force participation and fertility rate. Families with higher incomes have on the average 0.9 children versus families with lower incomes 1.5 children (Jorgensen & Russell, 1987; Women's Bureau, 1985). Women who have not finished high school expect to have 2.7 children, in comparison, women with more than five years of college plan to have 1.7 children (Women's Bureau, 1985). Moreover, Jorgensen and Russell (1987) found no evidence to support the prevailing assumption that religious or traditional folk beliefs prevented Mexican American women from using modern contraceptive methods or family planning facilities. Lack of access to health facilities may prevent Mexican American women from obtaining modern contraceptive methods.

Chicana and Chicano social researchers have long speculated that two possible factors are preventing poor Mexican American women from seeking low cost health services. First, women might not seek low income services because of the stigma that is associated with receiving this type of help. Second, the different class background of the service provider and the client may prevent a clear understanding of what are the needs and problems of the client (Becerra

& Zambrana, 1985). Poor women are often perceived by middle class women as less articulate or sophisticated and their judgments may be evaluated as untrustworthy and irrational (Kendrigan, 1984). Mexican American women may not seek low cost medical services because seeking such services may accentuate more the stigma attached to their low socio- economic position.

It appears that the Mexican cultural value system is not the factor that is maintaining women of Mexican origin at a low socio-economic status. Rather, the lack of access to economic and educational resources is keeping women of Mexican descent in a secondary status in society. The above data reflect also the diversity of the Mexican American population and the universality of gender segregation.

The Mexican American Population

The Mexican American community is a very complex cultural mosaic. It is primarily composed of two main groups: Mexican immigrants and individuals of Mexican descent born in the U.S. During the last decade the Mexican American population in the U.S. has experienced a tremendous growth. According to census data in 1970 there were close to 4.5 million Mexican American individuals; by 1980 there were 8.7 million (Bean, Stephen, & Optiz, 1985). The Mexican American population in some areas is becoming a majority group. Mexican Americans are a very young

population. In 1980 34% of the Mexican American population were under age 15 in comparison to 26.6% of the U.S. general population. The medium age for Mexican Americans was 21.9 years compared to 30 years for the general population (Guendelman, 1987).

The great majority of Mexican Americans live in the Southwestern states. It is estimated that approximately 83% of the Mexican American population live in five states. These are, Arizona, California, Colorado, Texas, and New Mexico (Vargas-Willis, 1987; Cervantes & Castro, 1985). Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants live and work mainly in the Southwestern states.

Economic opportunity is the primary incentive for Mexican men and women to migrate to the U.S. under both legal and undocumented status (Bean, Cullen, & Stephen, 1985; Guendelman, 1987). In Mexico males have a high percentage of unemployment in the rural areas. Migration overall, increases labor force participation for both men and women. For Mexican males their participation in the job market increases 1 1/2 times. On the other hand, for most women their chances for first time involvement in the labor market increases tenfold (Guendelman, 1987). Migration increases the labor force participation of Mexican immigrant females.

In general, Mexican Americans are a diverse population.

The above description is only to present an overall view of the Mexican American population.

The Immigrants Are Coming!

The presence particularly of Mexican immigrants is increasingly becoming a highly controversial issue, despite the fact that the U.S. is to a high degree a nation of immigrants and the world champion of human rights. During times of economic prosperity undocumented workers have been welcomed by the agricultural industry and U.S. government. During economic recession these same workers are blamed for the ills of the economy (Bustamante, 1981; Mirande, 1988). The present economic problems facing the U.S. market set the appropriate climate for government officials to launch an anti-immigrant campaign. The purpose of this strategy is to prevent the attention of the public in focusing on the internal problems of the U.S. economic system.

The sensationalist campaign about the "silent invasion" of millions of "illegal aliens" to the U.S. has been mainly propagated by INS (Immigration and Naturalization Services) officials. INS officials used apprehension and deportation statistics to estimate the number of undocumented workers living in the U.S. (Sommers, 1981). According to more empirical research the estimate ranges between 1.2 and 2.9 million at the upper limit (Garcia y Griego & Estrada, 1981). The subtle message in this "alien invasion" is that

immigrants are taking jobs away from native people and taking advantage of the public institutions. Research data has not supported either assumption.

Current research on the impact of undocumented workers in the labor market is in its early stages but three factors seem to be clear. First, undocumented workers create jobs by providing a cheap labor force for small industries (Bustamante, 1981). Second, they generally take those jobs that are not wanted by Anglos. Finally, undocumented workers pay taxes and few receive social service benefits or tax refunds (Bustamante, 1981; Turner & Musick, 1985). Undocumented workers benefit U.S. citizens by supporting the existence of a domestic Third World market system. Undocumented workers contribute to employment and not to unemployment rates as has been proposed by government officials.

Bustamante (1981) stresses that reputable economists have mainly cited structural factors for increasing unemployment and not the presence of undocumented workers.

> Yet, some public officials have found it more expedient to blame undocumented immigration--a factor defined as external to the system--for the higher rates of unemployment . . . Undocumented workers are hired not necessarily because there is a job that happens to be vacant, but because certain conditions in the U.S. labor force make these immigrant workers more exploitable than the local labor force. This working condition of powerlessness is the essence of the creation of a label of illegality

> for the immigrant worker. (Bustamante, 1981, p. 98)

Garcia y Griego, and Estrada (1981) point out that unemployment fluctuations are the direct result of changes in prices, overproduction, technological advances, and government budget deficits. However, undocumented workers are blamed for the problems of the U.S. economic system. Undocumented Mexican workers pay taxes and the majority of them receive no benefits in either social services or tax refund benefits. In one study, 74.4% undocumented Mexican immigrants reported that they had tax deductions withheld from their pay checks (Bustamante, 1981). In 1970 alone, undocumented workers contributed about 300 million in government taxes (FICA) and approximately twice this amount to the general tax fund. Sixty percent of their taxes go to the federal government, nevertheless, there has been no effort on the part of public officials to reach a consensus on how to distribute this tax revenue (Cornelius, Chavez, & Castro, 1982). Undocumented workers contribute to this country's tax revenue, yet, they receive no benefits in return.

The issue of national security has gained momentum in the last decade. According to this doctrine, immigrants are a threat to national security by introducing non-Western customs, ideologies and political instability. This

immigrant invasion sentiment is succinctly encompassed in the following quote,

> Large communities of illegal immigrants may experience cultural dislocation, economic problems or perceived discrimination and become sympathetic to movements using violence to protest and improve their situation . . . or immigrants who are not adequately assimilated may retain and import into the United States the political and ideological conflicts of their original country. (Francis, 1985, p. 7)

Such sentiment is also clearly present in the provisions of recent immigration reform bills. Immigrants are denied full "citizenship" status under the new Immigration Reform Act of 1986 (Mirande, 1988). Mexican immigrants do not have the same legal protection or rights under the law as other U.S. citizens. Consequently, Mexican immigrants can't participate in the legal or in the political democratic process of this country.

Under this "alien invasion" atmosphere gross human and constitutional rights violations become legalized and justified. Few public officials, researchers and Chicano leaders cite the present economic system and not migration as mainly responsible for dictating the economic climate of this country. Second, they do not challenge the unconstitutionality of the provisions under the immigration reform bills (Bustamante, 1981; Mirande, 1988; Turner & Musick, 1985).

Border Patrol and INS officials have a long history of denying the constitutional and human rights of undocumented individuals. Apprehended undocumented individuals have been detained in centers that are in deplorable condition and that closely resemble concentration camps. For example, 200 undocumented workers were housed in a chain linked facility with the capacity to seat only 80 individuals and had only primitive toilet accommodations. Often, undocumented workers are detained in a prison and are not charged with committing any crime (Mirande, 1988).

The focus placed on Mexican undocumented workers has conveniently covered the true key issue involved, Mexico-U.S. relations. The interest of the U.S. is to maintain a Third World job market system and to obtain natural gas, oil, uranium and other natural resources from Mexico at a low cost (Portes, 1981; Sommers, 1981). The interest of Mexico is to use the U.S. as a political safety valve to prevent further escalation of the present social unrest that exists in the country. It has been estimated that 50% of the working population in Mexico is underemployed or unemployed (Bustamante, 1981; O'Connor, 1981). Unfortunately, Mexican undocumented and documented workers have been caught in the middle of the U.S.-Mexico economic battle. As such, Mexican immigrants are experiencing

discrimination by not having a "citizenship" status in this country.

Problems Encountered by Agricultural Workers

Farmwork in California is done mostly by hired labor and the majority are workers of Mexican descent. Sixty-five percent of the farm work in the U.S. is done by farmer families and farmers. Close to 78% of the agricultural work is performed by hired workers (Martin & Vaupel, 1985). Most of the farmwork is performed by Mexican immigrants and other minorities. The Office of Migrant Health has estimated that there are approximately 2.7 million migrant and seasonal farmworkers in this country. According to this data, more than half a million are migrant farmworker families and close to two million are seasonal farmworker families. Other estimates range from less than half a million to more than three million seasonal worker families (Wilk, 1986). This data indicates that agricultural work is done primarily by Mexican immigrant families.

More Mexican families are involved in the agricultural labor force than any other group. Survey data indicates that about 58% of the Mexican families have a household member working in agriculture. In contrast, the second largest group is composed of unaccompanied single and married men. In the third group, at least one of the household members is a U.S.-born citizen (Mines, 1985). In

general, Mexican immigrants work more often in agriculture than Mexican Americans.

Agricultural workers are employed by small farmers, large agricultural corporates, and farm labor contractors (FLC's). The tasks most often performed tasks by agricultural employees are harvesting, hoeing, thinning, pruning, and harvesting grapes, fruits and vegetables (Light & DiPerna, 1986; Mines, 1985). Women in general perform the less arduous harvesting tasks.

In general female farmworkers work fewer weeks during the year and have less skilled jobs than male farmworkers. On the average, women work sixteen weeks a year and men work about 25 weeks. It has been estimated that women do more than half of the hoeing and sorting. In comparison, men dominate the more skilled jobs, such as machine operators, irrigators and supervisors (Mines, 1985). Women work less than men and perform the lower paid jobs in the fields.

The most labor intensive tasks are performed by newly arrived young immigrant males and the less arduous jobs are done by older men and women. Young male adults do most of the heavy harvesting, as it demands heavy lifting, stooping and long working hours. On the other hand, older males and women perform the less arduous harvesting, such as picking grapes, strawberries, tomatoes. Two important factors that

are contributing to allowing women more work in the field are a) the use of the conveyor belt for sorting and b) food packing at the worksite (Light & DiPerna, 1986; Mines, 1985). These agricultural industrial techniques have considerably reduced the need for heavy lifting.

Current research indicates that farmworkers are becoming a more stable population due to two major factors. In the past fewer individuals worked primarily as farm laborers, today there are more "committed" farmworkers. For example, in 1983 there were more individuals working mainly as farm laborers than in 1965 (53% vs 42%) (Mines & Martin, 1988). Migration has been on the decline in the last decades principally due to the expansion of agricultural production which in turn increased the demand for hired labor. Approximately one-third of men and 18% of women followed the crops in 1965. In comparison, by 1983 only one out of five men and about 17% of women migrated to other agricultural areas (Mines & Martin, 1988). It appears that modern techniques have increased land production and the demand for manual labor. Second, unemployment insurance (UI) benefits have allowed farmworkers to maintain a more stable life (Light & DiPerna, 1986; Martin & Vaupel, 1985; Mines & Martin, 1988).

A recent survey indicates that farmworkers have a high utilization rate of social insurance programs due to their

frequent and long unemployment periods. Mines and Martin (1988) found that about two-thirds of the farmworkers interviewed reported having applied for UI benefits. Only 30% of undocumented workers had applied for UI benefits and few received welfare payments. One out of eight farmworkers were on disability insurance and 71% received social security payments. One quarter received Medi-cal or food stamps (Mines & Martin, 1988). One thing to keep in mind is that farmworkers are not dependant on welfare programs but rather the drastic economic needs of farmworkers prompt them to utilize the social insurance unemployment programs.

Overall, farmworkers pay for their own medical bills even though they have a very low income. In one study, over one-third of farmworkers reported that they paid for medical services from their own personal earnings (Mines & Martin, 1988). This poses an economic burden to farmworkers for most earn incomes below the poverty level.

Low Wages

Accurate estimates of farmworker earnings are hard to obtain, however, one consistent finding is that they earn low wages and most live in poverty. It has been estimated that in 1983 the average yearly income of agricultural laborers was about $4,620. Moreover, the average income for a family of four was about $9,000. The latter figure indicates that in 1983, 70% of all farmworker families

living in California lived in poverty according to government standards ($10,178) (Mines & Martin, 1988). This data indicates that the majority of farmworkers live in poverty.

Females overall earn substantially less than male agricultural workers. Women earn about 15% less than men in the agricultural sector. This wage differential is in part due to the fact that men are hired more often than women in piece rate jobs, performing arduous tasks that often involve fast pace and intensive labor (Mines & Martin, 1988). Under the piece rate system, workers are paid for units of work performed, number of buckets filled, instead of being paid for the number of hours worked. Women campesinas (women farmworkers) are earning significantly less than men because they are in the less skilled jobs.

Employers are required by law to pay farmworkers the minimum hourly wage. However, depending upon the employer sometimes workers can earn as much as 28% more than an hourly wage or can earn as little as $ 2.91 per hour, far less than the standard minimum wage (Light & DiPerna, 1986; Mines & Martin, 1988). It seems that the minimum wage code is not regulating the wages of farmworkers and as a result workers are paid arbitrarily.

In general, workers under union contracts and those hired directly by employers earn better wages than workers employed by Farm Labor Contractors (FLC's). Estimates of wage increase due to union membership range from 13% to 24%. In California the average earnings of a unionized worker is $6.16 an hour versus $5.55 for non-union workers. Moreover, workers employed directly by growers earn 26% more than those hired by FLC'S. Nevertheless, there is no evidence indicating that the wages of farmworkers have improved since 1965 (Martin & Vaupel, 1985; Mines & Martin, 1988). Farmworkers earn low annual wages due to the seasonal nature of agricultural labor. On the average farmworkers only work 20-30 weeks during the year (Martin, & Vaupel, 1985). Consequently, farmworkers are unemployed for long periods of time. Mines and Martin (1988) reports that only 40% of farmworkers are employed for about six months during a particular year. Mines and Martin (1988) reports that farmworkers perceive low pay and unemployment as their core problems and the principal factors responsible for their social oppression. In addition, farmworkers stated that the services they most needed are help in filling out government forms and finding jobs.

Farmwork: A High Risk Occupation

Mining is considered the most dangerous occupation while agriculture ranks as the second most hazardous

occupation in the U.S. Migrant and seasonal workers are at high risk of suffering injuries and work related illness. According to data from the National Safety Council, in 1983 approximately 1800 work-related deaths occurred among farmworkers. Moreover, about 180,000 agricultural workers suffered disabling injuries. These injuries were caused from falls from trees, poor posture due to chronic bending, and cuts from knives (Wilk, 1986). Poor working conditions are primarily responsible for the health problems of agricultural workers.

Research on the health status of agricultural workers of Mexican descent in the U.S. is scant and incomplete. In addition, data gathering in this area is hampered by the lack of a standard and systematic data collection method among health agencies that serve this population (Angel, 1985; Wilk, 1986).

Pesticide Related Health Problems

In the U.S. alone about one million pounds of pesticides are used each year. Furthermore, those crops that receive the highest application of pesticides are those that require the labor of seasonal workers. Fifty percent or more of farmworkers are hired to work in harvests during peak pesticide spraying (Wilk, 1986). Farmworkers are exposed to pesticides through a variety of ways, by aerial or ground spraying, contact with pesticide residues in

plants and vines, by consuming fruits or vegetables, and by using contaminated irrigation water (Cavazos, 1986; Wilk, 1986). In a survey study Mexican American male farmworkers reported that they had been directly sprayed with pesticides or had been exposed to pesticides an average of seven times per year (Wilk, 1986). The reported exposure number of incidents ranged from 0-40. Farmworkers are dangerously exposed to pesticides but systematic research in this area is almost non-existent.

High Rates of Infectious Diseases

Agricultural workers are more susceptible to infectious diseases than the general U.S. population. Farm laborers have a higher incidence of parasitic (worm and protozoan) infections than the total U.S. population. It has been estimated that farmworkers are twenty times more susceptible to contracting parasitic diseases and 11 times at a higher risk of contracting gastroenteritis and infectious diarrhea. Moreover, Wilk (1986) points out that 1981 data from the Center for Disease Control indicates that those states with a higher farmworker population had the highest prevalence of reported hepatitis cases. About 39% of all cases reported of hepatitis in 1981 were accounted for by three states alone, Florida, Texas, and California (Wilk, 1986). Wilk (1986) points out that the lack of appropriate sanitation facilities can facilitate the

spreading of infectious diseases among farmworkers and consumers through the contamination of agricultural products.

Another problem results from the fact that many women have to take their children (infants and under school age children) to work because of lack of child care facilities (Cavazos, 1986). Children in the fields are exposed to the same health hazards as adult farmworkers.

Poor Living Conditions

The majority of farmworkers live in very poor housing and pay high rent payments in return. Farmworkers can pay $250 for renting a small house or pay $150 for renting one room out of an average monthly income of $300 or $700. A family of four can spend as much as one-third of their annual income for housing alone (Mines & Martin, 1988). The majority of farmworkers rent small houses that are in poor condition. Others live in very poorly kept trailers and migrant camps. Workers live in very crowded conditions. Often two or three large families live together in one house or four to eight unaccompanied men live in one room. Other less fortunate individuals live either in abandoned cars, in shacks made of cardboard and plastic or simply under trees.

Some living units do not have adequate plumbing facilities. Under these conditions, farmworkers have to obtain water from one central source only and use unsanitary

communal sanitation facilities. Other farmworkers use irrigation water that is contaminated with pesticides for drinking and daily use (Cavazos, 1986; Light & DiPerna, 1986). A consensus among social research activists is the need to promote the political empowerment of farmworkers in order to change their situation.

Empowerment as a Political Strategy

The dismal social mobility experienced by the Mexican American community has been exclusively attributed to the Mexican cultural system. Major social issues such as institutional discrimination have not been addressed as the principal factors that are oppressing the Mexican American population.

In accordance with the "cultural disadvantage" research model, the most common methodology employed by social scientists often does not encourage the active involvement of the participants. Moreover, social scientists conducting this type of research often do not share a similar ethnic or economic background with the participants (Becerra & Zambrana, 1985). Such a research model introduces a "blaming the victim" bias.

The Western cultural bias inherent in the "cultural of disadvantage" research model is not very often questioned (Andrade, 1982; Becerra & Zambrana, 1985). As a result, social intervention is advocated primarily within an

individual or "blaming the victim" model. Albee (1981) points out that as long as the problem is "inside the individual" there is no need to change society. While the focus remains at the individual level, the structural factors responsible for maintaining Mexican American women in a second class status will be masked. Consequently, racism, classism and sexism will not be challenged by social scientists. In the area of program development, the target population does not play an important role in building the key components of an intervention program that will directly impact their development.

This expert-victim approach undermines the tremendous contribution that the target population can make in the design of a program. Oppressed people are in a better position than social researchers to have a more indepth understanding about their major needs and problems since they experience directly the effects of institutional discrimination.

A tragic result of this "blaming the victim" model is that the inhuman working and living conditions of Mexican American campesinas are not perceived directly linked with the present socio-economic and political system of U.S. society. Mulvey (1988) points out that these "systemic" factors are mentioned only vaguely in more progressive academic disciplines (Mulvey, 1988).

It is critical that social scientists develop research methods that promote the psycho-social and political empowerment of Mexican American women farmworkers. Such research strategies would foster "social and political changes that involve further significant distribution of power" (Joffe & Albee, 1981). Research findings are useless if they are not translated into a program for social action. Important findings can end up collecting dust in the corner of a library; this can be of great disservice to minority groups (Basch & Lerner, 1986; Becerra & Zambrana, 1985).

Current Research on Empowerment

Empowerment is thought to be a process which facilitates the development of proactive behaviors in individuals or communities who have a low power base in society. Individuals who develop social action competencies become more effective in making public policy and social changes. The assumption under this model is that people will gain more control over their lives and increase their democratic political participation in society (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988).

According to current research in this area, the sense of empowerment can emerge when people become involved in decisions that "affect community life" (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). Research results indicates that there is a correlation between greater participation in political

activities and psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment was positively correlated with leadership and negatively associated with alienation. Students and community residents who were more actively involved in organizational activities reported a greater sense of psychological empowerment than less involved individuals (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). Moreover, in this study it was found that individuals with lower SES reported a lower level of community participation than individuals with higher incomes. Nonetheless the question remains, whether political participation enhances empowerment or individuals who have a greater level of empowerment become more involved (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988).

Third World women's social action research has strongly indicated that organizing around legal issues overall increases women's human rights awareness. More importantly, it promotes empowerment and political activism among oppressed women (Schuler, 1987).

Third World women activists place primary importance in using the law as an instrument for social change. This is due to the fact that the legal structure dictates to a great extent women's economic-political status in society. Schuler (1987) brilliantly exposes the relationship that exists between oppression and the legal system.

> In some instances, women's inferior status is formally legislated; in others, it is produced and maintained through prejudicial social

> practices as well as through ignorance of the law by its intended beneficiaries, who consequently are unable to exercise the minimal rights the law does provide . . . Moreover, the very concept of rights is conditioned. The public sphere vs. private sphere ideology as expressed in law is a key measure of society's perception of women's rights. The private sphere (domestic life, home, and family) is considered the traditional domain of women. The public sphere (work and politics) is accepted as the domain of men. This public/private dichotomy is deeply ingrained in the law . . . Thus, the law plays a critical role in maintaining sexual stratification and in shaping the inferior social and economic position of women in society, functioning as both legitimizer and as regulator. (Schuler, 1987, p. 3)

The fragile socio-economic and political position of women at the grass roots level demands developing empowerment strategies that promote collective activism. However, as Leon (1987) points, making significant changes in the law is a monumental task, especially for those groups that are at the bottom of the socio-economic and political ladder. Mexican American women farmworkers have one of the lowest socio-economic and political statuses in U.S. society. The promotion of the social advancement of women farmworkers in the U.S. is increasingly becoming a human rights issue. Therefore, a social action strategy has to have a strong political base. Most importantly, it has to conceptualize the problems of women farmworkers as caused by external elements and not internal (Ballou & Gabalac, 1985). Therefore, the focus is not on the individual but rather on social systems.

Four important elements have been proposed as essential for individuals or groups with low social power to know and understand (Burghardt, 1982; Slipman, 1986):

1. How society operates and how it is controlled.

2. What are the nature and causes of social problems

3. Who should be involved in determining how to deal with social problems.

4. What are the appropriate vehicles to utilize in solving problems.

It is imperative that women farmworkers of Mexican descent have access to information about the socio-economic and political factors that are oppressing them. The dissemination of information about the above factors can be achieved by developing a community based radio program. Women campesinas listen to local radio stations to inform themselves about events that are happening in the community. Local radio stations provide information to farmworkers when a harvest season begins and what companies are hiring workers. Women listen to the radio while they are preparing lunch early in the morning, while driving to work, and while working in the fields. The radio is an important information resource for women campesinas living either in the city, in migrant camps, or in the open field. The radio as a popular informative tool is an appropriate

medium to promote the political empowerment of women campesinas.

The purpose of this study is to assess the major problems and the needs of women farmworkers of Mexican descent living in the Coachella Valley in order to develop the themes for a community based radio program. The goal of the program is to promote the empowerment of las mujeres campesinas (women farmworkers) by addressing their needs and problems within a socio-economic and political frame of reference, and avoiding the prevailing "blaming the victim" approach often adopted by social scientists.

CHAPTER 2

Method

Participants

Sixty Mexican American women (married and single parents) farmworkers from the Coachella Valley were interviewed in their homes. The participants were contacted at their respective homes by Chicana interviewers and were asked to participate in this project. The strategy that was adopted to contact candidates was by visiting residential blocks that were primarily populated by farmworkers according to demographic data provided by three community agencies. The systematic procedure that was followed to obtain a fairly representative sample of the population was by contacting only every other house in each residential block. The cities that were included in the study are Indio, Coachella, Thermal, Meca, Oasis and One Hundred Palms.

Materials

A bilingual needs assessment questionnaire was developed in order to asses the major problems confronting Mexican American women farmworkers today. The questionnaire had both closed and open ended items. The purpose

for developing the needs assessment questionnaire was to assess the major problems that women campesinas are confronting in the workplace such as health problems due to exposure to pesticides, poor sanitation facilities and to what extent women are sexually harassed in the field by either co-workers or foremen. Another factor assessed is women's campesinas poverty level in relation to their wages earned and number of months worked per year in the field. Another area assessed is the reason that women immigrated to the U.S. and the major problems that they confronted as immigrants. Finally, the purpose of the needs assessment questionnaire was to increase the participation of the target population in the design of a community based radio program by asking women farmworkers what topics/issues they considered important to be presented in a radio program.

The open ended section of the questionnaire was developed to evaluate women campesina's knowledge of the legal services, counseling and health services available in their community and to develop the themes for a radio program. For the open ended section of the needs assessment two raters independently organized the open ended items in categories. The inter-rater reliability was obtained at the .80 level. The results of the needs assessment will be used to develop the themes for a radio program.

A short version of the 20 item ARSMA (Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans) created by Cuellar, Harris, and Jasso (1980) was utilized to evaluate participant's acculturation level. The reliability coefficient of this scale for non-clinical populations was reported to be around .88 by the authors of this scale (Cuellar, Harris, & Jasso, 1980). Approximately half of the items were excluded because most likely these particular questions did not pertain to women farmworkers of Mexican descent living in the Coachella Valley. There is a low probability that Mexican American women have a meaningful contact with Anglo people due to several socio-economic and political factors. Second, there is a higher chance that women farmworkers are Mexican-born citizens since farmwork is in general most often performed by Mexican immigrants.

Form A of the Conflict Tactic Scale (TC) developed by Strauss (1979) was utilized to assess the conflict strategies employed by women farmworkers of Mexican origin. The reliability coefficient for both the reasoning and verbal aggression scales is .70 and .88 for the violence scale (Strauss, 1979).

Procedure

Residential areas highly populated by farmworkers were identified in the Coachella Valley according to demographic information provided by three local agencies, United

Farmworkers, California Rural Legal Assistance, and Catholic Charities, which serve this population. The method that was employed to contact participants was by systematically only visiting every other house in the designated residential areas.

At the beginning of the contact and throughout the interview process women were informed that all the information they provided was considered highly confidential. In order to protect their confidentiality, specifically from immigration officials, only their signature was required as a proof of their voluntary participation in the project. Women were informed of their right to refuse to continue with the interview at any moment and that there were no aversive consequences. Women were encouraged to discuss any concerns or questions they had about the project at any point during the interview. Participants were thanked for volunteering to participate in the project at the beginning and at the end of the interview. All the women that were contacted (participants and non-participants) were given a copy of a pamphlet that had information about social services in the community. The interviews were conducted in a semi-formal dialogue form by Chicana community advocates. This approach was adopted to facilitate participant's interaction for the standard interview process was unanimously rated by interviewers as a very unethical method to

conduct interviews with women farmworkers. Women farmworkers use a process oriented dialogue form of communication. It is very typical of women farmworkers to provide historical background before answering a question. Therefore, the structured component of the interview process was introduced when women themselves indicated they wanted to continue with this type of responsive format and when interviewers perceived that they were not interrupting the communication flow of the participants.

At the end of the interview women were thanked for their participation in the project. They were also encouraged to contact the interviewers if they had questions about the interview or needed any help for any type of problem.

CHAPTER 3

Results

Demographics

The demographic characteristics of women campesinas indicate that women farmworkers are facing tremendous health and social problems as agricultural workers. The problems they confront are the result of the low status that women campesinas have in U.S. society as members of an ethnic minority.

According to current demographic data and the results of this study women campesinas are a young population. As illustrated in Table 1, 57% of the women interviewed were under 37 years of age. The findings of this study were consistent with those reported by Guendelman (1987), in 1980 the median age of Mexican American women was 21.9 and 30 years for the general U.S. population (Guendelman, 1987). The age of women campesinas has serious health implications considering the arduous labor involved in agricultural work.

The age and job data of women campesinas obtained in this study strongly suggests that at a young age women campesinas are performing arduous and intensive

agricultural tasks in the field. As indicated in table 2, more than 56% of the women interviewed in this study worked with the grapes and 38% with fruits and vegetables. More than 1/2 of the women reported that the tasks they most often performed in the field were pruning grape vines, picking grapes and packing fruits. As seen in Table 2, more than 40% of the women worked in picking fruits and vegetables. The crops that most campesinas are harvesting in the Coachella Valley require intensive labor under extreme (hot and cold) temperatures and the use of sharp tools. As such women campesinas are at a high risk of suffering serious injuries and skeletal deformities due to arduous labor and physical/mental exhaustion, as previous research in this area indicates (Wilk, 1986).

Wilk (1986) reports that migrant and seasonal workers are at a high risk of suffering injuries and skeletal deformities as a result of the strenuous labor involved in agriculture. In 1983 about 180,000 farmworkers suffered disabling injuries due to falls, cuts from knives, chronic bending and stooping (Wilk, 1986). Unlawful working schedules and working conditions established by employers have been pointed out as the two primary factors involved in exposing farmworkers to work related injuries and health problems. Often employers require farmworkers to work for long hours under hot or cold temperatures without a break

or without providing an appropriate supply of fresh drinking water (Light & DiPerna, 1986; Wilk, 1986). Under these poor working conditions workers run the risk of suffering physical and mental exhaustion. As a result of mental and physical fatigue workers can become careless in using harvesting tools and consequently suffer serious cuts or injuries. Moreover, research indicates that repetitious flexing and bending can seriously damage the skeleton, joints and body muscles (Wilk, 1986). A primary preventive measure that can significantly help in decreasing the injuries suffered by farmworkers is the enforcement of the labor provisions that protect workers against inhuman working conditions.

The enforcement of the labor codes that protect farmworkers is not a simple matter due to the low status that agricultural workers have in the U.S. labor market. Agricultural labor is considered an "un-American" job and as such primarily minority immigrants are hired to perform this low status job (Bustamante, 1981). The "core" group of farm-workers is composed of Mexican nationals. According to survey data by 1983 Mexican immigrants comprised three-fourths of the total agricultural labor force. Another 20% are farmworkers of Mexican descent, born and raised in this country. The rest of the agricultural labor force is composed of immigrants from other countries such

as, Punjabis, Filipinos, Arabs, South East Asians, Jamaicans, Haitians, Puerto Ricans, Guatemalans, Salvadorans, Cambodians, and Central American refugees (Light & DiPerna, 1986; Mines, 1985). It has been pointed out by labor and social scientists that the rights of agricultural workers are denied because farmworkers have the status of labor commodities in the labor market (Chavez, 1986; Turner & Musick, 1985).

Education

The educational level of most Mexican immigrants is very low according to the results obtained in this study and those reported in other studies. Table 3 shows that more than two thirds of the women campesinas interviewed had received only elementary education. A low percentage (11%) of the women had attended high school and 8% had less than two years of college. The low educational achievement of Mexican immigrants has been reported in other studies.

This low educational achievement places women campesinas at a great disadvantage in the labor market. Women campesinas are constrained to use farmwork as a primary way of subsistence because they lack the education to obtain a better job. Another unfortunate consequence of the low educational attainment of women campesinas is that often they are perceived as ignorant and incompetent by social

scientists and community activists (Castillo, 1980; Kendrigan, 1984).

The informal language used by women campesinas is consistently considered as an inferior style of expression by social scientists and community leaders. For example, when women campesinas were asked what were some of the problems that they were confronting due to their exposure to pesticides, some of the women answered that they felt like they had a ants nest in their lips. What the women meant by this phrase is that their lips were getting numb and they felt sharp pains. A social scientist not having an appropriate understanding of the colorful and dynamic language expressions used by women campesinas would have trouble interpreting women's linguistic styles. It has been pointed out by several Latin and Chicana feminists that the phrase, "poor women can't articulate their needs and problems" reflects the incompetence of educated individuals to understand informal languages (IV Encuentro Feminista Latinoamericano y del Caribe, Mexico 1987; Kendigran, 1984). The recognition that the informal language used by women campesinas is a valid intellectual form of expression is an important step in the promotion of women's intellectual equality. However, such recognition does not solve the problem of the low educational level of women campesinas.

Women campesinas perceived education as an important tool in the promotion of the socio-economic and political advancement of both agricultural workers and their children. Education was one of the main radio topics that women campesinas thought needed to be addressed (see Table 12). About 90% of the women indicated that they would like for their children to become professionals or obtain a better education. Women believed that by obtaining a higher education their children can have a better future. The high value that women campesinas placed on education challenges the myth held by educators that Mexican immigrants are not interested on their children's education.

Women campesinas need equal access to the educational institutions of this country in order to improve their economic and social position. The major impediment facing women campesinas ability to gain equal access to the educational system of this country is institutional discrimination or racism (Turner & Musick, 1985; Vasquez, 1984). Women campesinas will gain access to the educational system when they are treated as first class citizens. However, the present anti-immigrant sentiment predominant in U.S. society warrants the exclusion of women campesinas from the educational system of this country.

Legal Status

A consistent finding is that women more often migrate to this country with proper documentation than men. In line with this migration trend, a significant number (65%) of the women campesinas interviewed in this study were legal residents while about 28% had a pending legal status under the amnesty program. Only 6% of the women interviewed were U.S. citizens. Other studies have reported similar findings.

Mines (1985) found that more female campesinas were legal residents than male farmworkers. Two thirds of the women farmworkers had a permanent resident (green card) status. In contrast, 22% of the male workers were undocumented and only 11% of the female respondents were undocumented workers (Mines, 1985). This data indicates that female campesinas in general migrate more often with proper documentation to the U.S. than male farmworkers.

In the present study 28% of the women campesinas indicated that they had applied for amnesty. Applicants under the amnesty program have a pending legal status in the U.S. There are also several legal steps that applicants under the amnesty program have to follow in order to obtain legal residence. For example, most applicants are required to learn basic English, to learn the history of the U.S. and to have no criminal record in order to qualify for legal

residence (Briano, 1986) However, women campesinas who are granted legal residence status in the U.S. will not be considered U.S. "citizens" under the law. There is a waiting period and other requirements before amnesty applicants can apply for U.S. citizenship after they obtain a legal residence. Without citizenship status women campesinas remain second class citizens.

Civil Status

A low percentage of women campesinas were single parents in this study in contrast to other research data indicating a higher incidence of single head of households among women of Mexican decent. Table 4 indicates that approximately 88% of the women were married in comparison to 11% who were single parents. This data is not consistent with other findings indicating a higher incidence of single parenthood among women of Mexican descent.

National data shows that about 50% of Hispanic families are supported by a women alone (Pearce, 1986). However, the low percentage of women campesina head of households does not reflect a higher marital stability among farmworkers couples than the general Mexican American population. It appears that women campesinas stay in unstable marital relationships due to economic factors. Several women campesinas indicated that they wanted to get a divorce, however, they abstained from either obtaining a

divorce or a legal separation because they could not afford to raise their children by themselves. The most common way that these women managed their marital problems was by not having a sexual or intimate relationship with their husbands. Women campesinas living in this type of relationship still identified themselves as being married. The apparent marital stability of farmworkers couples is due to the fact that women campesinas, for economic necessity, are living in non-marital relationships with their partners.

Number of Children

As described in Table 5, women had on the average 3 to 4 children and more than one third of the children were under age six. Women campesinas in general have very young children. This poses a problem in regards to child care needs. Women campesinas have to leave for work around 5:00 to 6:00 in the morning and return from work between 2:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon. As discussed in a later section, child care needs were identified as a major problem confronting women campesinas.

Internal Migration

Current research indicates that overall farmworkers are becoming a more stable population and the findings of this study supports this trend that the majority of women campesinas (60%) did not migrate to other agricultural areas in search of work. Only about 3% of the women

migrated to other agricultural valleys in search of work. These findings are consistent with other research data which indicates that migration has been on the decline.

In 1965 one-third of men and 18% of women followed the crops. In 1983 only one out of five men and about 17% of women migrated to other agricultural areas (Mines, 1985). In general, women campesinas are migrating less often today than in the past to other agricultural valleys in search of seasonal work.

The two primary reasons that have been cited for this trend are the expansion of agricultural production and workers' unemployment insurance benefits. First, the industrialization of agricultural production has increased the demand for hired labor over longer periods of time. Second, unemployment insurance benefits have allowed farmworkers to maintain more stable lives by their not being forced to immediately move to other agricultural areas at the end of a work season (Light & DiPerna, 1986; Martin & Vaupel, 1985; Mines & Martin, 1988).

The seasonal nature of agricultural work appears to be the main reason women campesinas apply for Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits. Seventy percent of the women interviewed had applied for UI benefits. These results correspond to other data. Mines and Martin (1988) reports that about two thirds of farmworkers apply for UI benefits.

Unemployment insurance is an important source of income for women campesinas while they are unemployed. However, unemployment benefits have not improved the living standard of farmworkers. Consistently poverty has been the major problem confronting farmworkers (Light & DiPerna, 1986; Mines & Martin, 1988).

A lower percentage of the women campesinas interviewed reported receiving other types of social service benefits in comparison to results obtained in other studies. Sixteen percent of the women campesinas had applied for food stamps and 11.67% for AFDC benefits (Aid for Families with Dependent Children). In contrast, Mines and Martin (1988) found that one quarter of the respondents in his study received Medical benefits or food stamps. The above data contradicts the assumption that Mexican immigrants are a public burden to U.S. society. As tax payers, women campesinas receive UI benefits and other aid at the cost of their own labor and not at the expense of public funds (Bustamante, 1981).

Immigrant Women

Consistent with other findings, economic opportunity was the primary reason women campesinas cited for migrating to this country. Most of the women campesinas (86%) interviewed indicated that they migrated to the U.S. in order to work. Several of the women expressed that they felt the

need to come and work in the U.S. because their families were living under poverty in Mexico.

Other data also indicates that economic need is the reason that motivates Mexican women to migrate to the U.S. (Bean, Cullen, & Stephen, 1985; Guendelman, 1987). Migration overall increases the labor force participation for both men and women. For women the chances for first time involvement in the labor market increases tenfold with migration and for men it increases 1 1/2 times (Guendelman, 1987). Poverty compels Mexican women to cross the border under both legal and illegal means.

Crossing the U.S. border illegally can be an expensive and dangerous process. Undocumented immigrants cross the U.S. border most often by either walking through the desert or by crossing the Rio Bravo (Gomez-Quiñonez, 1981). Undocumented immigrants are often victims of crime. The "alien" status of immigrants makes them easy prey for muggers, thieves, corrupt law enforcement officials, smugglers and paramilitary groups. In 1975, in San Diego county alone undocumented workers were victims of the following crimes; 290 robberies, 16 attempted robberies, 21 assaults, 16 rapes, and 4 homicides. According to law enforcement officials only one out of ten crimes against undocumented individuals are reported (Villalpando, 1981). It has been estimated that about 4,000 undocumented

individuals every year are victims of crime (Mirande, 1988). The above facts clearly indicate that migration is exposing Mexican women immigrants to other forms of social and personal exploitation.

Recently, the feminization of migration has become an international Third World Women's issue (IV Encuentro Feminista Latinoamericano y Del Caribe, Mexico 1987). According to immigration experts, pressing economic needs and political unrest in Third World countries will be forcing more women head of households to seek a better future in wealthier countries. Current data indicates that women's migration rate has been consistently increasing over the last decade. During and before the early 1960's men immigrated to California in considerably higher numbers than women. At that time the male-female ratio was two to one. This pattern has been consistently changing, today women and men migrate at the same rate (Mines & Martin, 1988).

It appears that work has been an important avenue for immigrant women to adapt to their new environment. Forty-six percent of the women reported that working has been the main thing that has helped them in adapting to their new surroundings. Several of the women campesinas stated that working has allowed them to meet other people and become more socially active. Five percent of the women indicated

that they have not adapted and plan to return to Mexico in the near future. Overall, women indicated that they had no major difficulties in adapting because they had close contact with other Mexican immigrants.

Nevertheless, consistent with previous research findings women campesinas identified lack of English skills as the major problem that they confronted when they arrived in the U.S. Eighty-six percent of the women indicated that not knowing English has been a big problem since their arrival in this country. Approximately, 85% of the women indicated that they have tried to learn English since they arrived in the U.S., however, many have been unable to continue English lessons due to transportation and child care problems. Previous work indicates that immigrant women perceive lack of English skills as a significant barrier in their adaptation process. Melville (1981) reports that Latin female immigrants expressed feeling a sense of helplessness because they could not speak or understand English. The above findings support the assumption that women campesinas perceive English as an important tool in their adaptation process.

Another major problem that women campesinas indicated having when they immigrated to this country was not having information about the health care and social services available in the community. A significant number of women

campesinas expressed a serious concern that upon their arrival in this country they did not know what health (66%) or social (66%) services to contact. It is not surprising that immigrant women perceived as a high priority knowing the public health and social services available in the community considering the high poverty rate that exists among immigrants. The high cost of private medical care makes these services inaccessible to immigrants.

Consistent with other findings, women campesinas indicated that relatives living in the U.S. helped them substantially in coping with the new culture when they came to this country. Eighty percent of women campesinas said relatives living in the U.S. played an important role in their cultural adjustment when they migrated to this country. The way in which relatives helped women cope with their new environment was by serving as both personal and community resources. Women campesinas expressed that family members helped them tremendously because they had someone they could visit and talk with about the customs of this country. Moreover, relatives helped women by giving them information about jobs, low income housing, and what food markets carried Mexican products. According to this study the family network appears to be an important coping mechanism for immigrant women.

Acculturation

A low acculturation level appears to be characteristic among the participants as measured by the acculturation scale developed by Cuellar, Harris, and Jasso (1980). The majority of the women were either born (95%) or raised (80%) mainly in Mexico. Ninety-eight percent of the women identified themselves as Mexican. A high percentage (89%) of the women expressed feeling proud of their ethnic identity. A low percentage of the women knew how to read in English (16%) and how to write in English (13%). The majority (90%) of the women identified themselves as Catholics in contrast to 10% Protestants. Religion has been identified as an acculturation index in social research due to the fact that the majority of Mexican immigrants are traditionally Catholics. For this reason, religion has been an important factor for measuring acculturation level among immigrants. The low acculturation level among women campesinas is expected considering that women live very close to the U.S.-Mexico border and as such maintain a meaningful contact with the Mexican value system.

Primarily three interrelated factors are keeping women campesinas in touch with the Mexican value system. First of all, the women interviewed live about 80 miles from the U.S.-Mexican border. It is very typical for women living in the Coachella Valley to go shopping or for entertainment

to Mexicali (a Mexican city on the border) during the weekends. Second, there is a constant influx of Mexican immigrants to the Coachella Valley. Finally, immigrants and agricultural laborers tend to live in the same low income residential areas. Therefore, women farmworkers have a greater chance of having more contact with new Mexican immigrants than with middle class Mexican Americans or with Anglos.

Women campesinas recognized that in terms of their Mexican customs, migrating to the U.S. did not change things dramatically because they continued having contact with other Mexican immigrants. In order to illustrate this point, when women were asked if they had experienced being discriminated against in this country, a common response was: "How could I know, I do not live or work around Anglos." Women campesinas pointed out that they celebrated special occasions like baptisms and birthday parties with Mexican immigrants that were from either their same state or hometown. The low acculturation level found among women campesinas can be accounted for by the close contact that they maintain with the Mexican cultural system.

Hembrismo and Machismo

It appears that women campesinas are in cooperative gender role relationships according to the findings of this study and other research data. The results obtained in

this study illustrated in Table 6 shows that couples almost equally share in the decision making process (M = 2.018), nonetheless, domestic work is still performed significantly more by women (M = 1.927) than by men. However, twenty percent of the women reported that domestic tasks were equally divided among themselves and their partners. Women campesinas indicated that they performed most of the domestic work when they were not working in the field. Nevertheless, these results indicate that women are not in totally role segregated marital relationships.

Other findings also indicate that women of Mexican origin are in cooperative gender role relationships. Guendelman (1987) reports that migrant couples developed a cooperative system, both men and women participated in the decision making process and in performing the domestic work. Women campesinas are in general in more cooperative marital arrangements than in highly traditional relationships but still share more of the burden of the domestic work. Contrary to other findings women campesinas interviewed in this study had a strong non-traditional gender role orientation regardless of their acculturation level. Overall, women perceived the development of an egalitarian relationship among couples as essential. The majority of the women strongly indicated as depicted in Table 7 that domestic work (M = 4.593) needs to be divided equally among

couples and the decision making process ($\underline{M}$ = 4.864) needs to be a joint endeavor between husband and wife.

No significant relationship was found between women campesinas' acculturation level and their gender role perception. These findings do not support research findings that indicate that women campesinas hold traditional gender role values. Ortiz and Cooney (1985), found that immigrant women who indicated a higher acculturation level tended to hold less traditional gender role values than immigrant women who reported a lower acculturation level.

Indigenous Research Design

The socio-economic and ethnic background of the researcher are believed to be the two factors responsible for introducing the Western middle class bias in a research design. Often social research is conducted by researchers who have different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds than those of the participants (Andrade, 1982; Becerra & Zambrana, 1985).

Two important factors that differentiate this study from previous research models are the process adopted to interview women campesinas and the similar ethnic and socio-economic background of the interviewers, of the participants and of the researcher. First, the interviewers and the researcher were women of Mexican origin. Most

importantly, the majority of the interviewers and the researcher had experience working in the fields.

Second, La Charla (a dialogue) was the technique adopted to conduct the interviews. La Charla is the natural dialogue form employed by Mexican women immigrants to communicate verbally with other women (Becerra & Zambrana, 1985). For example, women campesinas before answering a question typically share a personal experience that at times appears totally unrelated to the question. This linguistic process can be misinterpreted by inexperienced interviewers. It can appear to the interviewer that the participant does not understand the question when in reality the interviewer is the one who is not understanding the answer. The above was not a problem since most of the interviewers were familiar with women campesinas' communication style. The familiarity that interviewers had with the language of women campesinas fostered the development of a more egalitarian interviewer-participant relationship during the interview process.

Therefore, the interviewers were able to capture the essence of the ideas presented by women campesinas. Women campesinas were not perceived by interviewers as ignorant or having problems articulating answers because interviewers understood their language. This facilitated the development of a "safe" environment for women campesinas to

openly express non-traditional gender role ideas. Expressing feminist ideas is not an accepted norm for women in the Mexican immigrant community. In general, women campesinas do not share liberal ideas because they do not want to be perceived as being highly "Americanized" (Andrade, 1982; Baca, 1982). The stereotype prevalent in the Mexican immigrant community of an Americanized Mexican women is that of a promiscuous and masculinized woman. Women campesinas share feminist ideas when motherhood and women's femininity are not undermined. This is not to say that women campesinas have an ultra value for motherhood or traditional women's roles. Motherhood is simply part of their present reality. Second, women campesinas dress in a highly feminine fashion in order to deal with the stigma that is attached to their low socio-economic status and work dress code. Understanding women campesinas' language and their socio-economic experience is vital.

Women campesinas have been blamed in the past for their lack of economic, educational and political resources because traditional research models have inherent in their design the "culture of disadvantage" bias. The results of this study show that women campesinas have a low socio-economic and political status in U.S. society due to systemic factors. The detrimental impact that systematic discrimination is having on the socio-economic and political

advancement of women campesinas is described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Occupation Related Problems

Poverty

It is an irony that women migrated to the U.S. primarily to better their economic condition, however, one of the major problems that they identified confronting is poverty. Women on the average earn less than $5,000 a year. It was estimated that about 91% of the women earned less than $9,000 a year. Women's income did not significantly improve when her partner's earnings were included since 78% of the women report that their partners were agricultural laborers. Table six indicates that the average income for married women was less than $9,000 a year. This figure becomes even more dramatic considering the fact that women had on the average 3 to 4 children. According to government's standards a family of four lives under poverty when their yearly income is less than $14,000 a year. There is no evidence indicating that the wages of farmworkers have improved since 1965 (Martin & Vaupel, 1985; Mines, 1985; Mines & Martin, 1988).

Seasonal work is another factor that is contributing to the low earnings of farmworkers. Women considered

seasonal work as a serious problem confronting women farmworkers in the Coachella Valley. Three fourths of the women reported working less than seven months per year. High periods of unemployment seem to be a major problem that farmworkers face due to the seasonal nature of agricultural work.

The assumption that women farmworkers of Mexican origin live in poverty because of their cultural value system is the most clear example of the "blaming the victim" model. Under this victim blaming model the economic, political and social factors that dictate the wages of agricultural labors are ignored by social scientists. There are innumerable factors that influence the wages of agricultural workers such as racism, Mexico-U.S. relations, immigration policy, the lack of enforcement of labor regulations, and market fluctuations, just to name a few (Bustamante, 1981; Garcia y Griego & Estrada, 1981; Mines & Martin, 1988; Mirande, 1988). Unequivocally, the cultural value system of women campesinas do not dictate the wages in the agricultural labor sector.

The poverty experienced by farmworkers in this country has been justified with the myth that the agricultural industry is doing immigrants a favor by hiring them as agricultural laborers. According to this ideology, Mexican immigrants are economically better off by living in this

country than if they were in their country of origin (Bustamante, 1981). In other words, the poverty experienced by immigrants in this country is more humane than the one they were experiencing in their own country. Farmworkers are expected to accept their role as labor commodities to show their gratitude to this country for welcoming them as immigrants. Conveniently, social scientists, lawmakers and employers overlook the fact that the agricultural industry has flourished at the expense of the labor and poverty of farmworkers.

Occupational Exposure to Pesticides

Occupational exposure to pesticides was considered by 95% of the women as a major problem confronting women farmworkers. Pesticide related health problems were reported by 66% of the women. Three percent of the women said that they had a possible spontaneous miscarriage. Six percent reported acute pesticide poisoning. Women also reported feeling nausea (20%) and 10% actually had episodes of vomiting at work. Thirty-five percent of the women had allergies. Other symptoms were eye irritation (26%), respiratory problems (15%) and hair loss. Other studies have reported similar pesticide related health problems.

Epidemiologic data shows that each year 313,000 individuals probably suffer from pesticide-related illness. Some of the most immediate effects of acute pesticide

exposure are dizziness, vomiting, "pin-point pupils," skin rashes and poisoning (Wilk, 1986). One finding that has not been reported in other studies is the fact that the facial (eyebrows and eyelashes) hair of women farmworkers is falling out due to pesticide exposure. It was estimated that about 20% of the women who were interviewed in this study have this particular problem while only 3% reported that it was a problem.

Exposure to pesticides has been linked to several health problems. Women campesinas reported that they are directly exposed to pesticides while working in the fields. Eighteen percent of the women indicated that at least once they had been sprayed with pesticides while working in the field. Of those who were sprayed, 10% indicated that they had been sprayed once, 3% twice, and 3% between 3 to 5 times. Several women pointed out that very often "clouds" of pesticide fumes, from nearby fields that were being sprayed, landed in their field while they were working. Occupational exposure to pesticides appears to be a prevalent problem among farmworkers.

Direct exposure to pesticides has been a recurrent problem reported by farmworkers. In a survey study Mexican American male farmworkers reported that they had been directly sprayed with pesticides or had been exposed to pesticides an average of seven times per year (Wilk, 1986).

According the Food and Agricultural Code, agricultural laborers are permitted to enter an area treated with pesticides,

> after the spray has dried or the dust has settled, a treated area may be re-entered without restriction . . . It is illegal for an employer to allow a worker to enter an area treated with pesticides to perform activities that may involve contact with the treated plants, until the prescribed re-entry period is expired. (Craddock, 1988, p. 46)

Despite the pesticide and worker safety codes, women campesinas are exposed to dangerous pesticides while working in the field.

Empirical research on the long term effects of acute and chronic occupational pesticide exposure in farmworkers is almost absent. Moreover, the legal acceptable level of pesticide residue exposure for consumers does not apply to farmworkers. Only the level of pesticide residues in fruits is examined but not foliage or soil contamination levels. Considering that farmworkers are continuously and directly exposed to highly contaminated foliage, soil and other agricultural elements while working in the fields this is a significant omission (Wasserstrom & Wiles, 1985). Wasserstrom and Wiles (1985) point out that economic considerations have taken precedence over workers' occupational health safety.

Farmworkers are an invisible work force to employers and social policy makers. The unresponsiveness of

employers and law makers to the pesticide health problems of farmworkers in the workplace has raised serious ethical dilemmas. The issue of ethnic genocide is being seriously considered by labor leaders as an explanation for the lack of empirical research a d stricter labor policies in this area (M.E.Ch.A. 20th Anniversary Conference, 1989). For example, "high chronic" occupational exposure to pesticides has been associated with cancer, still births, spontaneous abortion, sterility, congenital abnormalities, and other problems in the reproductive system (Schwarts & LoGerfo, 1988; Wasserstrom & Wiles, 1985; Wilk, 1986). However, the long term effects of pesticide exposure are still at a speculative stage due to the lack of empirical research in this area.

The message that minority immigrants are a racial threat to U.S. white population is presented in a inconspicuous way. Sommers (1981) cleverly noted that the statement, by the year 2000 California will become "a Third World State" carries a racist message to white people (Sommers, 1981, p. 152). The message sent is clear, minorities and in particular Mexican descendants are becoming the majority in this country. As such, Mexican Americans are going to take over the social institutions of this country. Therefore, the position of Mexican immigrants in this country is becoming more precarious.

Other Work Related Health Problems

Forty-one percent of the women reported having a work related health problem. Approximately 13% of the women reported that they had suffered from vaginal infections because they used the toilets in the field. Six percent of the women indicated that they had suffered from urinary tract infections (UTI) because they had abstained from using the bathrooms available in the fields. Women said that the few available bathrooms in the field are so filthy that they preferred not to use them. The inadequate sanitation facilities in the field can pose a serious health problem for pregnant women campesinas.

Women farmworkers run a higher risk of developing urinary tract infections (UTI) than male farmworkers. Overall, farmworkers are three to five times more likely to suffer UTI infections than the general population. However, women are more susceptible than men because of the shorter urethra which makes them more accessible to bacteria growth. Chronic UTI infections can lead to kidney infection or failure. Prenatal UTI infections have been linked with a higher risk of spontaneous miscarriages, fetal and newborn deaths and premature births (Wilk, 1986). This data has tremendous implications in regards to women's reproductive system for it has been estimated that in a field on any given day there are approximately 50 pregnant

women among 300 hundred workers (Cavazos, 1986). The lack of appropriate sanitation facilities has contributed tremendously to the high incidence of infectious diseases among farmworkers.

Employers are required by law to provide one clean toilet and a hand washing unit for every forty employees (Craddock, 1988). However, the most common practice followed by employers is providing one filthy toilet for every 200-400 workers (Cavazos, 1986).

Poor Working Conditions

Women reported that working conditions are becoming more drastic in the field. More than two thirds of the women reported that women farmworkers work under deplorable conditions. A recent trend reported by women farmworkers is that workers are being "forced" by employers to work at a faster pace. Moreover, employers are giving workers shorter lunch and rest breaks. Several women said that farmworkers who complain about the working conditions are fired by the foremen. According to women campesinas, crew leaders are constantly threatening workers. Crew leaders or foremen are telling farmworkers that if they cannot meet the labor demands they will be fired. The same working abuses were reported by farmworkers attending a community forum conducted by the U.F.W. in may 1989 in the Coachella Valley (U.F.W. Archives).

Sexual Harassment

Fifty-nine percent of the women considered sexual harassment a problem in the fields. More than half of the women (54%) agreed that foremen do not respect women farmworkers. Ten percent of the women had personally been sexually harassed at work by either a co-worker or foreman (8% and 1.67% respectively). None of the women reported having taken legal steps against their harassers. Sexual harassment in the fields has been a constant threat for women campesinas.

Current information indicates foreman are sexually harassing women campesinas more blatantly today than in the past. According to farmworkers present in a community forum, FLC's and foremen are sexually harassing women campesinas more often now than in previous years (U.F.W. archives). Today women campesinas are more physically and blatantly harassed by their intermediate employers than by co-workers. Verbal harassment has been the most typical form of sexual harassment performed by both foremen and male farmworkers against women campesinas. The higher incidence of physical sexual harassment against women in the field reflects the increasing deterioration of the working conditions in the field.

The above findings indicate that women campesinas live in poverty and are confronting serious work related health

problems because they are treated as labor commodities in the U.S. agricultural labor market. Farmworkers work under some of the most deplorable conditions in the U.S. despite the fact that they are working in one of the most prosperous industrial nations in the world.

No Health Insurance

It is not surprising that the majority of the women (85%) interviewed considered that not having health insurance was a big problem for women farmworkers. About 53% of the women had health insurance policies. One important thing to note is that health insurance coverage for farmworkers is based on seasonal work. In general, farmworkers are covered by a health insurance policy until a work season lasts. Overall, women campesinas do not have full time health insurance coverage. Apart from not having appropriate health insurance coverage, women campesinas seek the services of overcrowded low income health facilities and the services of private Mexican doctors.

Several women mentioned that they prefer to seek the services of private doctors in Mexicali instead of using the services of the migrant health clinic (El Progreso). Two of the main reasons given for not seeking the health care services of the migrant health clinic were (a) the high cost of the services in comparison to their incomes and (b) the low quality the clinic's services.

According to women campesinas, it was cheaper for them to see a doctor in Mexicali than using the services of the clinic. A prevalent complaint cited for not using the services of the clinic was the long hours that clients have to wait in the clinic before receiving the health care services. It appears that the high cost and low quality services prevalent in low income health facilities has encouraged women to seek the services of private doctors in Mexicali.

Health insurance coverage is an important issue for women farmworkers considering the array of work related health problems that they are suffering as a result of the poor working conditions in the field. Second, both private and low income medical costs can be a tremendous economic burden for women campesinas considering that women are earning incomes below the poverty line. Finally, women campesinas will gain access to high quality health care services when the racism inherent in the present labor policies is seriously challenged against the democratic provisions of the U.S. constitution.

CHAPTER 5

Community Related Problems

Poor Housing

More than three fourths of the women considered poor housing a major problem confronting women farmworkers. Three percent of the women reported that their apartments do not have indoor drinking water. Eleven percent of the women were asked to vacate the house or apartment in which they were living because the housing units had been condemned by county officials or because they were behind with their rent payment. Women had remained living in such units because they could not find other affordable housing. One consistent pattern observed by the interviewers was that women lived under crowded conditions. Often, two to three households (close relatives and in-laws) lived in a small house or trailer. Today in the Coachella Valley there is a severe housing shortage. This problem has been recognized by county officials. A project that has been developed by some county officials is a camping site for migrant farmworkers. However, a campsite will not resolve the housing problems of migrant farmworkers for two important factors that have eluded county officials. First,

migrant workers do not have RV's or appropriate vehicles and gear to use campsites. Most important, is the fact that Coachella Valley is a desert area and high temperatures are a major occupational health hazard for farmworkers (Wilk, 1986). Migrant workers using the campsite will be both working and living under excruciating hot desert temperatures. Instead of solving a problem, the migrant camp project will add a major health hazard to migrant workers lives.

Homelessness is a problem for migrant families in the Coachella Valley. It was a rare occurrence to find migrant families living in self built camps before 1988. For example, few migrant families lived in one particular selfbuilt migrant camp in May 1988. A year later (May 1989) more than five families are living in this camp. Irrigation water often contaminated with pesticides is the main water source for these migrant workers. The seriousness of the housing problems of migrant farmworkers and the lack of appropriate response by government officials is clearly illustrated by the above observations. Migrant families need affordable housing units and not temporary weather harsh camping facilities.

Lack of Child Care Services

Approximately two thirds reported that it was hard for them to find baby sitters that wanted to work early in the

morning. Sixty percent said that it was hard to use the services of child care centers because they run on a regular 8-5 business schedule. Twenty-one percent of the women reported missing work because they could not find a baby sitter.

Twenty-eight percent of the participants indicated that they have taken their children with them to work because they were unable to find a baby sitter. This is another stressful situation confronting women at work, supervising their small children while working in the fields. Many women have to take their children (infants and under school age children) to work because of lack of child care facilities (Cavazos, 1986). Infants and children in the field are exposed to the same chemical and weather health hazards as adult farmworkers. However, children and infants are far more susceptible than adults to the effects of pesticides and extreme temperatures (Wilk, 1986).

Probably due to their unusual working hours most women farmworkers rely more on the services of private baby sitters or relatives, and less on child care centers. Fifty-five percent stated they pay a baby sitter to take care of their children. Thirty-five percent said that a relative took care of their children, and for 16% a friend takes care of their children. Only 6% reported using a

state funded child care center. Several women stated that they would like to have cooperative run child care centers in their own neighborhood. They perceived this type of cooperative child care arrangement as the most feasible alternative due to their working schedule.

Counseling Services

Women had no information on any agency that provided counseling services to low income families in the Coachella Valley. Eighty-five percent of the women did not know what agency to contact in case they needed professional counseling for an emotional/psychological problem. Sixty-five percent did not know where to go in the event that they needed marital/family counseling. These results have far reaching implications considering the fact that about 38% of the women interviewed had been abused by their husbands. The institution of the church is not an emotional support system for women campesinas as has been previously reported. The role of the church or priest did not play an important role in the area of family counseling as has been previously documented. Only 13% of the women said that they would seek the advice of a priest in the case of a family/personal conflict. The development of comprehensive indigenous-professional support systems is essential for the psychological well being of women campesinas.

Legal Aid Services

Despite the fact that several of the women interviewed had an array of legal problems, they did not know what agencies provided legal aid services to farmworkers. Seventy-five percent of the women were unaware of the few community agencies that provided legal advice. Sixty-three percent did not know the appropriate agency to contact in case of a labor problem. The most often mentioned legal problem was refusal of crew leaders to make payment for total hours worked. For example, one woman had twelve hours arbitrarily deducted from her pay check and her complaint was ignored by the crew leader. According to the campesina, "he told me, if you don't like it, there is a lot of people looking for work. I don't need you." Other women were facing eviction problems and were desperate because they did not know where to turn for help. The need to develop a social service resource booklet became evident among the interviewers.

These cases prompted the interviewers to develop a pamphlet on the social services available in the community. It is important to note that over two thirds of all the women who received a pamphlet during the study (participants and non-participants) subsequently used the services of these agencies according to intake statistics provided by staff from two agencies. One important element that

might have contributed to this heightened utilization rate among the campesinas is that most of the interviewers were also staff members of these community agencies. The positive attitude of the female interviewers tremendously supported the establishment of a meaningful relationship with the campesinas.

Treatment by Social Service Agencies

Sixty-three percent of the women perceived that they are treated in an inferior way by staff from social service agencies. Forty-eight percent reported feeling humiliated when seeking low income services. Fifty-one percent prefer to see a private doctor. Women campesinas expressed that most service providers do not listen to their problems.

The most common complaint that women expressed about the attitude of social service personnel was that they do not listen to women farmworkers. A specific case mentioned by a campesina captures the frustration and humiliation experienced by women farmworkers. She explained that her daughter was diagnosed as having a learning disability problem and was referred to a special education program because she was having problems at school. The mother tried to explained to her daughters' social worker and psychiatrist that her daughter was having trouble in school because she recently had a traumatic experience and also she needed prescription glasses. Her daughter had

witnessed her husband beating her. Both the social worker and the psychiatrist neglected to ask about the past emotional history of the child and arbitrarily assumed that the child needed remedial education. It is important that social and community workers receive training on egalitarian clientservice provider strategies which avoid class, ethnic and gender bias.

According to representatives from several community agencies the reciprocal client-service provider role needs to be highlighted in the training of social service personnel. Community representatives from several agencies that serve farmworkers in the Coachella Valley arrived at this conclusion after discussing the above results. They emphasized that professional and non-professional staff need to recognize that there is a reciprocal relationship between the client and the service provider. Another point brought out by the community representatives is that clients need to be informed of their rights before receiving any health or social service. In order to prevent incidents like the one described in the previous paragraph, training social service personnel in non-sexist, non-classist, and non-racist client-service provider relationships is essential for the ethical treatment of clients.

Family Related Problems

Eighty-five percent of the women reported that wife abuse is a big problem in the farmworker community. Thirty-eight percent of the women had been physically/verbally abused by their husbands in the past. Three percent of the women said that their husbands had threatened them with either a knife or a gun. One woman said that she had thought of committing suicide as a way to get out of her abusive relationship but a friend took her to an agency that provided counseling services. Women campesinas need to have access to high quality and culturally sensitive counseling services in their community.

Women farmworkers were more open discussing wife battering in the open ended part of the questionnaire. In the closed ended section 20% reported that they had been abused in contrast to 38% in the later open ended section. One possible explanation for this difference is that women waited to see if they could trust the interviewer before disclosing such sensitive information. Second, the closed ended section appeared very impersonal and this might have discouraged women from talking more in depth about their problems.

In the wife abuse area specifically interviewers tried not to act judgmental. Interviewers only provided women with information about social services in case they wanted

to seek professional help. Several of the women expressed that they were trying to get a divorce but their main impediment was lack of economic resources. Then, it is more understandable why 50% of the women expressed that they would like to have a better marriage or family life.

Several women also tended to immediately answer that they had no problems in their relationship. This prevented interviewers from asking each item of the Conflict Tactic (CT) Scale separately. Some of the women in the open ended section indicated that they had been battered in the past but not in the closed ended section of the CT scale. The validity of the information obtained in the CT scale is questionable and for this reason it was not further analyzed. However, the above findings provide important information and guidelines for developing more culturally appropriate domestic violence scales and interview techniques.

CHAPTER 6

Needs and Topics

Women campesinas addressed primarily three systemic factors to change their oppressive situation in the U.S. These factors are described in Table 11. As can be seen, the majority of the women considered economic changes (higher wages, $\underline{M}$ = 4.650), essential for farmworkers to gain a better socio-economic position in this country. Women campesinas pointed out that higher earnings can give farmworkers the economic power to obtain better housing, better health care services, and overall better living conditions. Second, women considered legal changes (better labor laws, $\underline{M}$ = 4.650) a vital process in order to promote the equal treatment of agricultural workers. Women campesinas cited two main reasons for the need to have better labor laws. First, women indicated that there is a great need to have laws that protect the rights of farmworkers. A legal mandate that would encourage employers to treat farmworkers as human beings and not as "beasts of burden" is needed. A woman campesina stated, "I bet you. If we were white, we would be treated with more respect in the fields." Second, women expressed that growers need to

receive higher economic and legal sanctions, such as long jail sentences, to foster employers' compliance with the law. These legal measures, women campesinas believed, would deter growers from spraying dangerous pesticides in the fields, from paying illegal wages, and from treating farmworkers like slaves. Women campesinas are very conscious that they are working in poor conditions in part due to the prevalent racist attitudes of the dominant society.

Finally, the collective organization (unionization $\underline{M}$ = 4.133) of farmworkers was considered a critical step in the process of democratizing the workplace. Several women said that farmworkers need to unite in order to demand better wages and better working conditions. According to women campesinas, it is not in the economic interest of the growers to pay agricultural laborers higher wages or to provide workers with decent working conditions. For this reason, it is essential that farmworkers get politically organized. The above factors were considered by women campesinas as the major economic and political elements that can significantly improve the poor living and working conditions of farmworkers.

On the other hand, the collective organization of women agricultural workers was considered essential to address the problems that women confronted. About 50% of the women campesinas explicitly stated that women need to

dialogue and unite in order to solve their problems. Some of the women commented that women need to organize because men are not sensitive to the problems that women confront in the fields or at home. Several women campesinas showed a high interest in participating in the political organizing of women campesinas.

Women cited three factors that are preventing them from participating more actively in the community. The lack of child care services during community meetings prevented women campesinas from participating. Second, women campesinas stated that they did not have reliable transportation to attend the meetings because they depended on their husbands to take them to places. This presented a serious problem for women since their partners opposed their involvement in the community. According to several women, the most frequent excuse given by husbands is that it is not appropriate for women to be in "the street" like men. One women campesina cleverly pointed out, "Most men are in the street wasting their time and money with their friends instead of doing something good for the community. A woman who wants to do something good for the community is seen by men as a bad woman." Other women campesinas said that there is a high need in the community to address issues of machismo in order for men to treat women on a more equal basis. Women campesinas are facing an array of

structural factors that impede their participation in the political life of the farmworker community. These obstacles need to be assessed in order to promote the collective activism of women campesinas.

A negative correlation was found between women campesinas' acculturation level and union affiliation. Women who scored higher in the acculturation scale showed a significantly less interest in belonging to a labor union than women who scored lower in acculturation ($r = -.45$; $p<.05$). It appears that women campesinas who are more acculturated perceive the collective political organization of farmworkers as less important than less acculturated women. The negative correlation that was found in this study between women's acculturation level and union participation is in line with other research findings.

Highly acculturated immigrants tend to evaluate their economic situation in more positive terms that less acculturated immigrants regardless of their economic position in society (Miller & Valdez, 1985). These data support the hypothesis advanced by Vasquez (1984) that it is not to the best interest of oppressed individuals to assimilate the value system of the dominant society. According to Vasquez (1984), individuals of Mexican origin can experience a sense of personal inadequacy and negative feelings against their primary reference group by accepting the values of

the dominant society (Vasquez, 1984). Cultural assimilation can play a detrimental role in the identity of Mexican American people.

The above data do not support the contention that acculturation can promote the socio-economic and political advancement of the Mexican farmworker community. Rather, acculturation seems to foster social conformity among Mexican immigrants. The negative impact that acculturation has in women campesinas is a serious matter considering that they live in poverty and do not have significant political power in society. Moreover, political activism has been a key strategy adopted by oppressed groups to gain socio-economic power in society. Consequently, acculturation is not a viable alternative for women campesinas to change the structural factors that are oppressing women farmworkers.

Radio Themes Identified by Women

Women campesinas identified radio themes consistent with the major problems and needs that they addressed. As illustrated in table 12, an equal percent (35%) of the women interviewed ranked as main topics the need of farmworkers to receive information about their rights in this country and about the community services available in the area. Women campesinas addressed topics ranging from human rights issues, community issues to domestic issues. These

results strongly indicate that women campesinas perceive their situation in socio-economic and political terms rather than in individualistic terms.

Women campesinas consistently addressed socio-economic and political factors as both instruments of oppression and of social change. The indepth structural analysis that women campesinas were able to develop in this study challenge innumerable postulates advanced by social scientists. Women campesinas have demonstrated beyond any doubt that they are not passive victims in their oppressive situation. As women themselves indicated, the social development of women campesinas is being suppressed by powerful systemic factors such as institutionalized ethnic, class, and gender discrimination. This advanced social synthesis of women campesinas in essence form the basis of a long term feminist empowerment model of social intervention.

CHAPTER 7

Campesinas' Community Radio Themes

Women campesinas developed the framework for an indigenous feminist radio model to promote the empowerment of women farmworkers. Eleven main topics were developed for the community based radio program in accordance with the needs, problems and main themes articulated by the women.

Accordingly, the themes of the radio program will center on addressing the sexism contributing to the problems and needs that women campesinas confront in society. The similarities that exist in racism and sexism will be especially emphasized during the presentations in an effort not to alienate the male radio audience. Most importantly, the goal is to promote women's equality in the Mexican immigrant community.

Women will be the main speakers for the program to promote the political involvement of women campesinas. Chicano (male) grass roots leaders who have a strong feminist orientation will be invited to present the themes that specifically address Machismo. Sexism is a very controversial issue and it has not been addressed in the past by most labor and community leaders. The assumption under

this strategy is that Mexican male immigrants are more receptive to listen to other men on this issue than to women. Furthermore, the need of feminist Chicano role models is important in the promotion of sexual equality.

It is highly recommended that the thesis material and the literature review be used as guidelines for each of the themes. These materials contain more detailed information on the issues involved in the radio topics.

Goal

A major goal of the program is to promote the political empowerment of women campesinas by popularizing the issues confronting women farmworkers in the Coachella Valley. A second goal is to address the topics in a sociopolitical frame of reference by not blaming women campesinas for their oppressive situation and lack of social mobility.

Objectives

The assumption under this Chicana empowerment model is that women campesinas can become more politically involved by having access to key information and community resources.

1. Information about their rights as workers.

2. Information about community services, such as legal aid, political organizations and health care facilities.

3. Information about systematic discrimination (sexism, racism and classism).

4. Information about alternative approaches for low income housing and child care programs, such as community cooperatives.

Community Resources

1. Women campesinas can receive information about the available community services in the Coachella Valley at the end of each radio presentation.

2. A social service pamphlet can be developed and can be available for women campesinas, and the public in general, at community agencies, neighborhood stores, and amnesty program courses.

Program Moderators

Members of Las Mujeres Mexicanas (women's support group). Speakers invited by Las Mujeres Mexicanas.

Special Considerations

1. At the end of each session speakers can be available to answer questions to audience members but off the air. This precaution is to protect the anonymity of the participants and to encourage their participation.

2. Women campesinas can be encouraged to contact the speakers at their respective agencies.

3. The wife abuse data obtained in this study cannot be disclosed at any stage during the radio program. This

measure is to protect all campesinas, who participated in this study, from possible retaliation from their husbands.

Opening Remarks

It is important that the moderator of the program emphasize the most important aspects of the program. First, the themes of the program were developed according to the needs and problems expressed by women campesinas. Other professionals and social researchers generally do not seek the direct input of the community to develop a project that is intended to have a significant impact in the community.

Second, the program is specifically oriented to address the problems and needs of women campesinas. Overall, the needs and problems of women campesinas are not well covered because the focus is on the problems affecting male campesinos. The purpose of the program is not to neglect other groups but to better serve women campesinas.

Radio Themes and Guidelines

I. Blaming women campesinas for their oppressive situation.

A. Objective

1. To increase the awareness of women campesinas on the process of systematic discrimination and the "blaming the victim" ideology.

2. To increase the awareness of Mexican women campesinas on the political importance of becoming U.S. citizens.

B. Points to Discuss

1. Blaming the Victim Ideology

a. assimilation: as a strategy to acquire social mobility

b. acculturation: as a strategy to acquire social mobility

2. Systematic Discrimination: Inaccessibility to key social resources due to ethnic background, low socio-economic status and gender identity.

a. Political system

(1) Local

(2) State

(3) National

b. Economic system

(1) Agribusiness

(2) Community private enterprises

c. Educational system

(1) Poor quality of education

(2) Few professionals in our community

d. Voting as a political strategy to gain access to key institutions.

e. Not accept the "blaming the victim" ideology

(1) Bilingual education and biculturalism: Our reality.

(2) Si se puede (We can do it) = our active involvement in all political and community aspects that affect our present and future.

(3) Legacy to our future generations: a better future.

C. Speakers

1. Mily Treviño, Las Mujeres Mexicanas
2. Juana Sauceda, Las Mujeres Mexicanas
3. Dolores Huerta, Vice-president (U.F.W)
4. Maria Elena Lopez-Treviño, Community Consultant

D. Resources

1. U.F.W
2. Voters League of Coachella Valley
3. Mujeres Mexicanas

II. Myths about Mexican immigrant women farmworkers

A. Objective

1. To increase the awareness of women farmworkers about their important economic contribution to the agricultural industry.

B. Points to discuss

1. Myth: Mexican women immigrants (documented and undocumented) farmworkers are a public and social burden to U.S. society.

2. Economic contributions of women campesinas to the agricultural industry.
3. Immigration a Mexico-U.S. issue.
4. Right to demand better wages, better working conditions and the enforcement of the labor laws.

C. Speakers
1. Doña Maria Serrano, Campesina leader
2. Dolores Huerta, vice-president, United Farmworkers Union
3. Maria Lopez-Treviño, community consultant

D. Community Contacts/Resources
1. United Farmworkers Union
2. California Rural Legal Assistance
3. Inland County Legal Services

III. Women farmworkers' rights under the labor law.

A. Objective
1. To increase the awareness of women campesinas about their labor rights.

B. Points to discuss
1. The minimum wage law
2. Pesticide exposure protection
a. Aerial and land pesticide spraying regulations
b. Field entrance warnings
c. Medical bills
3. Sanitary facilities

4. Harassment at work
   a. Unfair treatment
   b. Overwork
   c. Sexual harassment
5. Unionization and collective bargaining

C. Speakers
1. Mily Treviño, California Rural Legal Assistance
2. Lupe Quintero, California Rural Legal Assistance
3. Graciela Savala, Lawyer
4. Labor Commission Representative

D. Community Contacts/Resources
1. California Rural Legal Assistance
2. United Farmworkers Union
3. Labor Commission
4. Inland County Legal Services

IV. Health risks and effects due to occupational exposure to pesticides and poor working conditions.

A. Objectives
1. To increase the awareness of women campesinas about the short and long term health effects of occupational exposure to pesticides.
2. To increase the awareness of women campesinas of the importance of seeking prompt medical care for their personal health and for social policy changes.

B. Points to Discuss

1. Pesticide short term and long term effects

a. Health effects and risks

b. Lack of data

c. Medical bills

2. Infectious diseases

3. Prevention

a. Health care measures in the field

b. Enforcement of labor regulations

C. Speakers

1. Representative of El Progreso Health Clinic

2. Campesina, Las Mujeres Mexicanas

3. Maria Lopez-Treviño, Community Consultant

D. Community Contacts/Resources

1. El Progreso Health Clinic

2. California Rural Legal Assistance

3. Inland County Legal Services

4. Labor Commission

V. Low income housing and cooperative housing

A. Objective

1. To increase the awareness of women campesinas on the low income housing projects available in the valley.

2. To increase the awareness of women campesinas about cooperative low income housing projects as a possible alternative.

B. Points to discuss

1. Low income housing projects in the Valley
2. Cooperative low income housing project

C. Speakers

1. The Coachella Valley Housing Coalition
2. Mily Treviño, Las Mujeres Mexicanas

D. Community Contacts/Resources

1. The Coachella Valley Housing Coalition
2. California Rural Legal Assistance
3. Catholic Charities

VI. Adult education programs

A. Objective

1. To Provide information to women campesinas about English courses, vocational training programs and college education programs available in the Coachella Valley.

B. Points to discuss

1. ESL (English as a Second Language) programs
2. Vocational training programs
3. College of the Desert academic program

C. Speakers

1. Adult Education Representative

2. E.O.P (College of the Desert) Representative
3. M.E.Ch.A (College of the Desert) Member

D. Community Contacts/Resources
1. Adult Education
2. E.O.P (College of the Desert)
3. M.E.Ch.A. (College of the Dessert)

VII. Child care programs and developing child care service cooperatives

A. Objective
1. To provide information about available low income child care services in the Coachella Valley.
2. Encourage women campesinas to develop a plan for a child care program in accordance with their working schedule and present it to both state and federal agencies.
3. Encourage women campesinas to develop a cooperative child care program in their community.

B. Points to discuss
1. Campesinos Unidos child care program
2. Process to develop a grant proposal to demand assistance from state and federal agencies.
3. Cooperative child care as a feasible child care alternative.

C. Speakers
1. Graciela Savala, lawyer

2. Campesinos Unidos child care

D. Community Contacts/Resources

1. Campesinos Unidos child care center

2. California Rural Legal Assistance

VIII. Higher education as a right and the future for Mexican immigrant farmworker children.

A. Objective

1. To increase the awareness of women campesinas about educational resources for college students.

B. Points to discuss

1. Education: "a right not a privilege"

2. Education and the future of younger generations

3. The vocational tracking system vs formal education

4. Financial aid resources

C. Speakers

1. UCLA M.E.Ch.A

2. College of the Desert M.E.Ch.A

3. Cal State L.A. M.E.Ch.A

4. Indio-Coachella School District Chicano/Chicana counselors and teachers

D. Community Contacts/Resources

1. College of the Desert M.E.Ch.A. Advisor

2. Bilingual Education

3. Indio-Coachella Unified School District

4. Bilingual Parents Committee Representative

IX. Women campesinas right to demand respect from social service agencies personnel.

A. Objective

1. To increase the awareness of the right of women campesinas to receive and demand a professional treatment from service providers.

B. Points to discuss

1. The reciprocal role of the client-provider
2. Service versus favor
3. Strategies to demand professional/fair treatment
   a. An assertive approach
   b. Document incidents and contact a political group or organization
   c. Collection of signatures in the community

C. Speakers

1. Claudia Galvez, Las Mujeres Mexicanas
2. Juana Sauceda, Las Mujeres Mexicanas
3. Maria Lopez-Treviño, Community Consultant

D. Community Contacts/Resources

1. California Rural Legal Assistance
2. United Farmworkers Union
3. Las Mujeres Mexicanas

X. Similarities between racism, classism and sexism: systematic violence and oppression.

A. Objectives

1. To increase the awareness among the farmworker community of violence and discrimination against women
2. To demystify the myth of the traditional role that women campesinas play in the community

B. Points to discuss

1. Impact of discrimination
   a. Definition of racism and classism
2. Consequences of racism and classism
   (1) Low paying jobs
   (2) Long working hours
   (3) Poor working conditions
   (4) Lack of social and economic power
   (5) Low social status = lack of recognition of important contributions
   (6) Violence
3. Similarities between racism, classism and sexism
   a. Discrimination against women
      (1) Triple work load
         (a) Takes care of the children
         (b) Domestic work
         (c) Agricultural work
4. Violence against women
   a. Sexual harassment at work

b. Rape

c. Wife abuse

5. Our struggle for equality: La Lucha, Equality of women

C. Speakers

1. Feminist Mexican farmworker

2. Jose J. Treviño-Lopez, Teacher

3. Maria Elena Lopez-Treviño, Community Consultant

D. Community Contacts/Resources

1. Coachella's domestic violence center

2. California Rural Legal Assistance

3. Bilingual rape hotline

XI. Women campesinas past and present organizing efforts.

A. Objectives

1. To increase the awareness of women campesinas and the community of the important role that women campesinas have played in our long struggle.

2. To recruit women to become members of Las Mujeres Mexicanas or form women's support groups in their community.

B. Points to discuss

1. Mujeres en la Lucha: women in the struggle

a. Past

b. Present

2. Information about the present Chicana organizations in the Valley and in the county

C. Speakers

1. Devra Weber, Cal State Long Beach
2. Mary Prieto, Cal State Long Beach
3. Mily Treviño, Las Mujeres Mexicanas
4. Teresa Montoya Velez, Community Advocate

D. Community Contacts/Resources

1. Las Mujeres Mexicanas
2. MANA Riverside Chapter College of the Dessert M.E.Ch.A
3. Chicana Organizations
4. United Farmworkers Union

CHAPTER 8

Blaming Women Campesinas

The intent of this particular study was to develop a community based program in accordance to the needs, problems and radio topics identified by women campesinas. However, the empowerment model of the radio program was not supported as a result of the "blaming the victim" ideology prevalent in the professional community and the lack of a feminist political agenda. Consequently, the radio program was not implemented.

In the Coachella Valley there are two Spanish commercial speaking radio stations. A representative from one of the radio stations gave the following explanation for not supporting the model of the radio program. In the future the station will address more controversial issues that affect the Mexican American women, however, the radio station does not have programs on specific groups due to the vast listening audience.

It is interesting to note that the political and economic issues affecting the daily lives of women campesinas are considered controversial by professionals and community advocates. Despite the fact that women campesinas

identified such issues as the main topics for a radio program. A similar attitude was found among community professionals. Their reluctance in addressing controversial women campesinas' issues was the main reason for not presenting the program.

Some of the main topics proposed by a representative of El Progreso (health clinic) were to teach women campesinas good hygiene habits because women are having too many vaginal infections. Another topic suggested to teach women campesinas how to prepare nutritious meals. These topics clearly derive from a "blaming the victim" attitude. Two crucial health facts were ignored.

Research findings strongly indicate that the high incidence of infectious diseases among women campesinas is due the lack of appropriate sanitation facilities in the field. As such, the high rates of infectious diseases among women campesinas in the Coachella Valley is not because women campesinas lack appropriate hygiene habits, but because the sanitation labor laws have not been enforced by government officials (Light & DiPerna, 1986; Wilk, 1986). Second, women campesinas earn very low wages and as a result can not afford a balanced diet (Light & DiPerna, 1986). Women farmworkers are blamed for having serious health problems which are caused by external socio-economic and political factors. The focus placed at the

individual level will not have a serious impact in the health of women campesinas. The health problems of women campesinas will be prevented when health and government officials take an active role in enforcing the occupational health and safety codes that protect women campesinas.

It appears that women campesinas are more in tune than community advocates with the problems affecting their everyday lives and the social action needed to take them out of their oppressive situation. In order to honor women campesinas' struggle and dedication, the need to establish an independent radio station in the Coachella Valley became evident.

The need to have an independent radio station in the Valley became clear when the efforts to develop the radio program were not fruitful. The establishment of a bilingual non-commercial radio station can be a feasible objective since there are only two Spanish commercial stations in the Coachella Valley. Several labor leaders and community advocates have shown a strong interest in supporting this type of project. There is a growing recognition among Chicano or Chicana scholars and community leaders for the need to develop political empowerment strategies that reflect a grass roots agenda rather than an expert/interest group's agenda. It is imperative this agenda develop innovative programs to reach marginalized groups,

therefore, developing indigenous approaches and using popular communication channels such as the radio (National Conference of Chicano Studies, April 1989). Echoing the demands of people at the grass roots.

> We don't want professional/educated individuals to control our agenda. This is our community and we are the one's most appropriate to present and develop programs in our community. We need professional Chicanas to serve as resources and not as experts. (Las Mujeres Mexicanas, 1989)

Women at the grass roots level are demanding more and more to develop their own empowerment models and to become agents of social change. Most importantly, they are asking Chicana and Chicano leaders not to take a leadership position in the grass roots movement but rather to function as "on call community resources and advisors."

One important aspect of this study is that it developed into a community empowerment process. For now it is sufficient to point out that the Chicana organization, Las Mujeres Mexicanas, evolved as a result of this project. Therefore, as a grass roots political organism, Las Mujeres Mexicanas have empowered the rights to the radio program. Through their spontaneous empowerment process, the group earned the rights and responsibility for implementing and managing the radio program. In the event that in the near future this project receives the necessary funding and support.

CHAPTER 9

Political Empowerment Among the Interviewers

Unexpectedly, the Chicana interviewers engaged in a political empowerment process as a result of their active involvement in this study. At the end of the interviewing phase, the interviewers formed the political women's support group, "Las Mujeres Mexicanas." At this stage most of the interviewers had already developed a grass roots feminist consciousness. Three things have been cited by the interviewers that had an impact on their feminist political development: first, the knowledge and indepth understanding that women campesinas have about their situation; second, the high awareness among women campesinas for the need of women to organize collectively and to develop a strong solidarity base with other women; finally, the recognition among interviewers of the secondary role that they are playing in society as women of Mexican descent and the need to change such a pattern through political activism. Since their involvement in the study, the group has been active in the community and in promoting the political organization of women campesinas.

The pressing problems, needs and radio topics identified by women campesinas in essence provide the framework for a long term empowerment model of social intervention. This model was also foreseen by the founding members of "Las Mujeres Mexicanas." The interviewers designed a social service pamplet to give to all women campesinas that were contacted during this study. This resource book was created in response to the working, health and housing problems that women campesinas were having at the time when the interviews were conducted. According to one of the interviewers more than two thirds of the campesinas had contacted their legal aid agency by the end of the three weeks. The interview phase of this study lasted less than three weeks. All these developments strongly show the strong commitment that most Chicana interviewers developed for supporting the political empowerment of women campesinas and of Latin women in general.

The strong commitment of "Las Mujeres Mexicanas" to support women's campesinas political activism is illustrated by the last project developed by the group. Women campesinas are being interviewed at amnesty courses, social service agencies and in the community to asses what are the family, personal and community obstacles that impede women campesinas from participating in a women's support group. All the interviews are being conducted by members of the

group. Out of this project the group has already recruited several women campesinas. The membership in the group is constantly increasing and more women at the grass roots are showing interest in joining the group. The constant growing of the group's membership has become a major concern to the founding members. Presently, one of the group coordinators is preparing an agenda to develop different committees in accordance to the needs of the members. Moreover, she is preparing another plan "just in case that this turns into a major political project." With no doubt that the group Las Mujeres Mexicanas is having an important impact on the community. Most importantly, the group recognizes that social change requires a comprehensive political empowerment program. Taking the above outcomes into account, without question this particular study evolved into a community empowerment project. As such, the group Las Mujeres Mexicanas empowered the implementation of the radio program. In the event that the programs receives appropriate funding.

This outcome of the empowerment process is in line with current research in this area. It appears that Chicana interviewers developed a sense of empowerment by their active participation in the design of the interview process and the procedure to contact women campesinas. Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988) found that individuals who

are more politically involved in the community have a greater sense of empowerment than individuals who are not as actively involved. Third World Women's empowerment research strongly suggests that organizing around legal issues increases women's awareness about the need to develop a feminist human rights agenda (Schuler, 1987; IV Encuentro Feminista Latinoamericano y del Caribe, Mexico 1987).

The intensive contact of the interviewers with women campesinas increased their awareness of the legal issues involved and the needs and problems confronting women campesinas. Chicana interviewers are actively involved in developing a feminist grass roots agenda as active members of the group Las Mujeres Mexicanas. The long term impact that Las Mujeres Mexicanas will have on the community is hard to predict, however, one important step that the group has taken is demanding Chicano and Chicana professional activists not take a leadership position at the grass roots level but rather facilitate their political activism by working as community resources.

Without a doubt, such an unprecedented outcome has far reaching implications for social action research models. Empowerment strategies must consider the probability of triggering unexpected changes among groups that have close contact with the target population. In order for social

researchers to be better prepared to respond accordingly when unpredicted changes occur. Recognizing that a study may evolve into a more solid project than the one proposed, requires time and active involvement in the community.

CHAPTER 10

Conclusion

Women campesinas are working and living under the most inhuman conditions as a result of the powerful political and economic influence of agribusiness in the legal system of this country. The prevailing racist ideology fostered by the dominant society has prevented women farmworkers from having access to instrumental political and legal institutions. Accordingly, the civil rights and human rights of women campesinas are systematically denied and legally justified. The present anti-immigrant climate engulfing U.S. society makes women campesinas plight to demand the constitutional rights guaranteed under the U.S. constitution a perennial ordeal.

Women campesinas have a precarious position in U.S. society, consequently, they become easy targets of discrimination. Most Mexican immigrant farmworkers do not have "citizenship" status in the U.S. and as a result they are excluded from the democratic legal process. It took farmworkers fifty years of struggle, using hard medical data, to convince California legislatures to ban the use of the short-handled because it was causing farmworkers serious

skeletal problems (Light & DiPerna, 1986). This fact and other data indicate that women campesinas are considered labor commodities by growers and government officials.

Social scientists and labor leaders have arrived at the conclusion that it is more profitable for growers in California to violate than to comply with labor law regulations. Research data indicates that the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB) since 1983 has been dismissing more cases than in the previous decade. During the 1979-1983 the ALRB board acted on about 90% of the cases in contrast to 47% after 1983. Moreover, 39% of the cases were dismissed and only 38% went to grievance committees (Martin & Vaupel, 1985). Dolores Huerta (UFW vice-president) cites a case in which an employer fired his workers and refused to "bargain in good faith." The ALRB recommended that the employer pay workers on a make whole (pay full amount) basis but "the employer settled the case for ten cents on the dollar" (Huerta, 1985). Such imposed sanctions instead of deterring the unlawful behavior of agricultural employers serve as an incentive for employers not to comply with the labor regulations.

The few labor regulations that exist to protect farmworkers are not taken seriously by many employers in the agricultural sector due to their lack of enforcement by labor officials. For example, under the California Labor

Code on agricultural chemicals, pesticides can only be applied when there is no danger of contaminating humans (Craddock, 1988). Nevertheless, workers are dangerously exposed to pesticides by entering highly contaminated fields or by being sprayed directly with pesticides while working in the field (Light & DiPerna, 1986; Mines, 1985). The lack of enforcement of the health and safety labor codes by government officials is transforming these labor codes into paper and pencil regulations. In the last few years, the working and living conditions of farmworkers have grown worse.

The increasing deterioration of the working conditions in the fields is reflected in the rapid expansion of the Farm Labor Contractor system. In general farm labor contractors (FLC's) hire individuals who have less union experience than those hired by growers. In the Coachella Valley only 10% of the FLC's employees had union experience as compared to 19% of grower's employees. One important factor to note is that under the FLC system both the standard of working and living conditions for agricultural laborers drops considerably (Mines, 1985). In a community forum conducted by Cesar Chavez (UFW President) and Dolores Huerta (UFW Vice-President) in May, 1989 in the City of Coachella, a consistent complaint expressed by farmworkers was that FLC's are harassing workers more today than in

previous years. FLC's are demanding workers to work substantially more and are paying workers less than the minimum hourly wage required by law. Another problem presented by farmworkers is that women campesinas are being sexually harassed more often by FLC's in the fields. A consensus among both male and female farmworkers present in the forum was that the working conditions are getting drastically worse for agricultural workers living in the Coachella Valley. As long as government officials and employers treat farmworkers as cheap labor commodities workers will continue to be exploited and their rights denied.

A labor factor that is becoming evident is the expansion of a modern version of the "slave trade" system in the U.S. The presence of this slave system has been simply ignored by the public and government officials. The following are examples of the human trading process that is being used today by employers in the agricultural industry. Growers in Florida and Arizona pay about $450.00 for each employee they trade (Cavazos, 1986). In Oregon, Mexican indigenous people are brought from the far regions of Mexico and are kept in crowded camps that are in very poor condition. Armed individuals guard the camps and prevent union organizers from having contact with the workers (UFW archives). The prevalent double standard of the citizen and non-citizen status system in the U.S. is preventing

farm laborers from demanding decent working and living conditions.

The long struggle of farmworkers to demand decent wages and working conditions has been a very costly process and few gains have been made. In 1975, in California, farmworkers overwhelmingly voted union. Seventy-five percent were UFW (United Farm Workers) certificates and about 20% other unions. However, today more workers are selecting the "no union choice" (Martin, & Vaupel, 1985). One explanation advanced by community leaders for this non-union trend is that pro-union agricultural workers are often harassed by employers in order to intimidate other workers. This coercive tactic is adopted by employers to discourage workers' union affiliation. Despite the fact that the ALRA (Agricultural Labor Relations Act) protects:

> The exercise by workers of full freedom of association, self-organizing, and designation of representatives of their own choosing, for the purpose of negotiating the terms and conditions of their employment. (Tosdal, 1985, p. 149)

As Dolores Huerta (1989) points out, "Farmworkers cannot depend on the labor law to defend themselves." Presently, organized farmworkers are depending on consumer boycotts due to the ineffectiveness of government agencies to enforce the law.

Consumer boycotts are a contemporary strategy adopted by the UFW due to the fact that during labor strikes

agricultural workers have been seriously injured and others have lost their lives. Dolores Huerta (UFW vice-president) succinctly points out, four farmworkers have been killed and about 250 have been seriously injured but none of the employers have been hurt (Huerta, 1985). Dolores Huerta was almost fatally injured by a police officer in September 1988 while she was participating in a rally in the city of San Francisco (UFW Archives). Consumer boycotts are becoming important political strategies to demand the rights of agricultural workers.

Political activism is considered by grass roots organizers and feminist leaders an essential component in the struggle for women's social equality. However, one of the major problems that women farmworkers are confronting in the labor and women's struggle is their systematic exclusion from these political organizations. Women farmworkers in California are less unionized than women in the rest of the country. Only 15% of women in California are unionized compared to 27.6% of women in the country as a whole (Perloff, 1985). At the 1988 UFW convention far more men than women farmworkers were delegates. Moreover, only one woman is a member of the UFW executive board of nine members. Unfortunately, labor unions still have a strong Machismo orientation (Castro, 1986), despite the fact that historically women have been side by side with male

co-workers in the labor struggle (UFW archives). Women have been as active as men in the labor struggle, but they have not received the recognition that they deserve as agents of social change.

Women campesinas have not been meaningfully incorporated in the Chicano/Chicana movement, in the feminist movement, nor in the farmworkers labor movement. The intellectual and political capacities of Mexican American women campesinas have been undermined by Chicano, Chicana and feminist activists (Kendrigan, 1984; Vasquez, 1980). Women campesinas are excluded from the women's political movement by either not holding leadership positions or by not having the opportunity for meaningful participation in political events. Women campesinas' autonomous leadership is undermined by the prevalent assumption held by labor and feminist leaders that women farmworkers are passive victims of their situation. The victim-rescue syndrome is evident in the way in which community leaders ignore the presence of women campesinas at conferences. During a hearing conducted by Senator Alan Cranston to listen to the problems of the farmworker community as a result of the amnesty program, community leaders simply failed to acknowledge the need of women campesinas to present their unique problems themselves (Coachella Valley, 1988). What happened is that community leaders presented the problems that women

campesinas were having in the community, ignoring the fact that about fifty women campesinas had attended the meeting with the purpose of presenting their own problems to Senator Cranston. The following quote eloquently summarizes the tragic impact that such political practice can have on the socio-psychological development of a women's community.

> The underestimation of the intellectual and political capacities of the Mexican American women produced extreme results. Most common, inferiority complex led many women to depend on others for direction, credibility, and identity, both personal and politically. (Castillo, 1980, p. 10)

In other words, women farmworkers of Mexican origin are compelled to engage in a disempowering process by constantly receiving the message from labor and feminist activists that they are not competent to develop and to take their own political leadership in society.

The needs and problems confronting women campesinas requires a long term political empowerment model of social intervention. Women campesinas are facing powerful rivals, such as the agribuisness industry and a highly patriarchal, classist and sexist social structure. The following quote illustrates the control that the agricultural industry has in the legal system.

> Abused workers in California saw their hopes for a better life shattered because Republican Governor George Deukmejian, elected with contri butions of $1 million from corporate growers, won't enforce the farm labor law against those who break it. (Cesar Chavez, President UFW, 1986)

The present economic depression and political climate fosters the exploitation of women campesinas.

The "illegal alien invasion" hysteria is very much present in the 1980's since economic expansion is not characteristic of this decade. The provisions in the most recent immigration reform act passed by congress has unconstitutional elements similar of those of its predecessors. The provisions under the Immigration and Control Act of 1986 are:

1. Provides amnesty for undocumented persons who have been in the U.S. prior to January 1, 1982 and to those individuals who worked in the agricultural sector for more than 90 days before May 1986. However, undocumented workers will not receive a citizenship status under these provisions.

2. Sanctions employers hiring undocumented workers.

3. Includes a provision to strengthen the U.S.-Mexican border to curtail the flow of undocumented workers.

4. A guest (H-2) program to bring Mexican workers as agricultural laborers. H-2 workers can not qualify for legal residence in the U.S., they have to return to Mexico after their employment is terminated (Briano, 1986; Mirande, 1988).

One of the provisions that has been challenged by Chicano and Chicana activists and other organizations is

the provision penalizing employers for hiring undocumented workers. It is strongly contended by The Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) and other groups that this provision will facilitate employers to discriminate against Latinos (Mirande, 1988). Under this new law, employers function as INS agents and have the control to decide who is legal or illegal in this country. Individuals of color will be required more often than white people to prove their legal status in the U.S. while seeking employment (Sommers, 1981). In other words, Mexican descendants are to employers and INS officers either "suspects," "aliens," or "wetbacks," but not citizens.

Promoting the democratization of the work place and the domestic sphere requires the collective political organization of women campesinas. Women campesinas addressed such feminist empowerment models of social intervention in this study. They consistently addressed socio-economic and political factors as elements of oppression and social change. The above indicates that women campesinas have an extraordinary understanding of both their situation and the structural change that needs to take place in order to change their oppressive socio-economic and political status.

The global and indepth understanding that women campesinas have about their oppressive situation is evident in

the problems and solutions that they identified. Occupational exposure to pesticides, poor working conditions and low wages were the main problems that women campesinas identified.

The marginal role that women campesinas play in society increases their awareness of the systemic factors that are constraining their socio-psychological and political development. Three key social factors were addressed by women campesinas that can change their situation; women campesinas indicated that higher wages can give them the economic power to better their living conditions; second, women reported that farmworkers need labor laws to protect their human rights; third, women campesinas perceived unionization as an essential process in their labor and human rights struggle. The factors addressed by women challenge the "passive victim" role of women farmworkers. Women campesinas addressed legitimate personal and social action.

Women campesinas are in unique position to evaluate the economic contribution that they make to agribuisness by observing each step involved in the food production process and its corresponding capital outcome. Women campesinas can assess directly the material, political and legal power gained by growers at the cost of the hard labor of farmworkers by simply comparing some factors. For example, in

a regular grape season, women campesinas can compare the thousands of 30 pound boxes of grapes that leave the field each day against their wages and the opulent living arrangements of their employers. The political and legal power of growers is manifested in the lack of legal repercussions against them for the illegal wages and working conditions of workers.

In the domestic sphere, women campesinas addressed an egalitarian system of power and domestic work distribution. The majority of the women strongly preferred an egalitarian distribution of decision making and domestic work responsibilities among couples. These results contradict with the traditional assumption that women of Mexican origin prefer a traditional marital role. Women campesinas express feminist ideas when their role as wives and mothers is not undermined by the way a question is addressed or worded. Women campesinas have a strong sense of pride as mujeres (women) which often is interpreted as a traditional orientation on the part of social scientists. This heightened sense of pride comes from their need to distinguish themselves from the sexual liberation of Anglo women which unfortunately has been misrepresented in the Mexican American community as sexual promiscuity. Women campesinas are aware that women need to struggle for social equality in both the public and domestic spheres.

The struggle of women campesinas for sexual equality is evident in the cooperative relationships that they developed with their partners. Most partners shared equally in the decision making process, however, domestic work still was performed more by women than by men. It is clear that males take a "helping" role in the area of domestic work instead defining it as their own duty or responsibility as was pointed out by several of the women. Several women campesinas indicated that their husbands "helped" with domestic households only when they both were working in the field. It is doubtful that most men voluntarily agreed to take some of the domestic burden since domestic work is universally considered "a woman's job" and has a low social status. It appears that women campesinas are using their economic position in the family system to negotiate for a more cooperative marital relationship. One women said that "she refused to go to work in the field" until her husband agreed to help her by taking care of the children. The strategies which women are adopting to produce such significant changes in the domestic realm is an important topic for future research studies. For now suffice it to state that it appears that women campesinas are translating the labor strike bargaining skills learned in the field into the domestic sphere.

The double work load of women campesinas as field laborers and domestic workers has instilled in campesinas a strong sense of the need for social equality. They specifically stated that women need to dialogue and unite in order to solve their problems. The proposition advanced by most Chicana, Latin and Anglo feminists that educated women identify the "women's problem" better than less sophisticated women is not supported by the results of this study. The social and domestic analysis provided by women campesinas indicate that they have a strong feminist orientation. Harstock (1985) points out that,

> Women's lives make available a particular and privileged vantage point of view on male supremacy, a vantage point that can ground a powerful critique of the phallocratic institutions and ideology that constitute the capitalist form of patriarchy.(Harstock, 1985, p. 231)

According to Harstock's analysis, women campesinas have a unique position to synthesize their reality due to the several layers of oppression that they experience as immigrants and women of color.

In addition to developing a feminist empowerment model of social intervention, women campesinas created an indigenous leadership model. Several of the women campesinas expressed that women farmworkers do not need others to take the leadership role in their struggle for social justice. The statement of one woman campesina expresses the struggle of women campesinas to develop an autonomous leadership:

"Women campesinas need to unite, leaders and educated people ignore us because we are women, and because we are poor."

Three main obstacles were cited by women campesinas that impeded their active participation in the labor struggle. Women stated that they need someone to take care of their children while they attend meetings. Another obstacle that women cited which is preventing them from becoming more politically active is their lack of transportation. The third major reason given for not participating in political events is their partner's opposition to their involvement in community events. Women campesinas need access to community resources and information about social issues affecting their lives in order to promote their political involvement.

As pointed out earlier the themes that were developed in accordance with the problems and needs identified by women campesinas in essence form the basis of a political empowerment model.

A community based radio program can promote the empowerment of women campesinas by addressing issues in a socio-economic and political frame of reference. This approach can facilitate the political activism of women campesinas by validating the comprehensive understanding that they have about their social reality. This can be achieved by

not blaming women campesinas for their oppressive situation but rather by discussing publicly the systemic factors that are oppressing women campesinas.

The radio as a popular communication medium can reach a larger audience. Therefore, marginalized women campesinas who live in self built camps can be reached through the radio and as such will have access to important information. The radio program becomes important as it is able to reach women campesinas who are isolated due to lack of transportation. Another important aspect of a radio program is that it can reach the public in general. This presents an opportunity to dispel or demystify stereotypes about women campesinas by disseminating the information about the situations and the structural factors oppressing women campesinas. Secondly, demystifying the myths about women campesinas can function as an strategy to foster the involvement of the public in supporting the struggles of women campesinas. Public support is needed in order to change the present unconstitutional labor regulations, especially in the area of public policy change, the support of the public is essential.

The effectiveness of the radio program can be enhanced by linking other community resources into the program. The development of a social service pamphlet can provide important information to women campesinas about the resources

available in their community. Second, the radio program can be most effective by having a women's steering committee responsible for managing the radio program. As such, women campesinas would have the opportunity to contact other women campesinas and Chicana community advocates who are supporting the organizing efforts of women farmworkers.

Women campesinas, community leaders and the public in general need to understand that the poor working and living conditions of women campesinas are due to the powerful influence that the agricultural industry has in the political and legal system of this country. Second, it is important to understand the classist and sexist structural factors that impede women's participation in the labor and feminist struggle. Women campesinas are not passive victims. Within the confines of their socio-psychological and political reality they are active participants in the movement for social justice. Women campesinas do not need outsiders to take over political leadership, rather, they need the support of feminist, Chicana and Chicano activists to develop an autonomous leadership. Women campesinas need access to economic, political and psychological resources to become more effective agents of social change.

A quote by Levine (1981) beautifully captures the essence of the struggle by women campesinas to gain access to a democratic system.

> The tyranny of the workplace is not legitimate and every employee ought to have a right as a "citizen" of a workplace to participate in those affairs that impact on his or her life. (Levine, 1981, p. 165)

In sum, the fragile socio-economic and political position of women at the grass roots level demands developing strategies that promote collective activism. However, as Leon (1986) points out, making substantial and meaningful changes in the law is a monumental task, especially for those groups that are at the bottom of the socio-economic and political strata.

Mexican American women farmworkers are at the bottom of the socio-economic latter of U.S. society. The promotion of the human rights of women campesinas in this country is imperative. Women campesinas are facing tremendous exploitation due to their ethnic background, social class and gender. For this reason, it is essential that social scientists develop indigenous strategies that promote the political empowerment of women campesinas. The plight of women campesinas is to be treated as citizens and not as "aliens."

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Tables

Table 1

Participant's Age Distribution

Age	N	Percent
19-24	7	11.67
25-30	14	23.33
31-36	14	23.33
37-42	9	15.00
43-48	6	10.00
49-54	4	6.67
55+	6	10.00

Table 2

Crops Harvested and Tasks Performed by Participants

Crop	N	Percent
Grapes	34	56.67
Fruits & Vegetables	23	38.33
Citrus	2	3.33
Other	1	1.67
Task	**N**	**Percent**
Picking Grapes & Vine Thinning	33	55.00
Picking Fruits & Vegetables	25	41.67
Other	2	3.33

Table 3

Participant's Level of Education

Education	N	Percent
No Schooling	6	10.00
Elementary	42	70.00
Secondary	7	11.67
College	5	8.33

Table 4

Participant's Civil Status

Status	N	Percent
Married	53	88.33
Separated	4	6.67
Widowed	2	3.33
Single	1	1.67

Table 5

Percent Distribution of Number of Children and Their Age

Number of Children	N	Percent
1-2	19	31.67
3-4	23	38.33
5-7	11	18.33
8-13	5	8.33
Age	**N**	**Percent**
0-6	42	37.50
7-12	30	26.08
13-17	29	25.21
18+	14	12.17

Table 6

Division of Housework and Decision Making Among Couples

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Decision Making	2.018	0.551
Housework	1.927	0.766

1=Partner makes all decisions
2=Equal decision making
3=You make some decisions
4=You make all the decisions

1=You do all the housework
2=Partner does some of the housework
3=Equal work by both partners
4=Partner does all the housework

Table 7

Participant's Perceived Egalitarian Role Among Couples

Decision Making	Mean	Standard Deviation
Equal decision making	4.86	0.345
Partner should make all the decisions	2.15	1.375
You should make all the decisions	1.78	1.146
Domestic Work	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Housework should be divided equally	4.59	0.722
Partner should do all the housework	1.52	0.935
You should do all the housework	2.18	1.479

1=Strongly disagree
2=Disagree
3=Neutral
4=Agree
5=Strongly agree

Table 8

Participant's 1988 Earnings

Participant's Income	N	Percent
$1,000 or less	10	16.67
$1,001-$5,000	34	56.67
$5,001-$9,000	11	18.33
$9,001-$13,000	1	1.67
$13,001-$17,000	0	0.00

Table 9

Total Income

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Participant's Income	2.054	3.085
Participant's and Partner's Income	3.891	1.946

1=$1,000 or less
2=$2,000-$5,000
3=$5,001-$9,000
4=$9,001-$13,000
5=$13,001-$17,000

Table 10

Percent Distribution of Month's of Field Work

Months	N	Percent
2-4	19	31.67
5-7	28	46.67
8-12	13	21.67

Table 11

Solutions Identified by Participant to Solve the Problems Facing Women Farmworkers

Solution	Mean	Standard Deviation
Higher wages	4.733	0.482
Better labor laws	4.650	0.606
Belong to a union	4.133	1.112

1=Strongly disagree
2=Disagree
3=Neutral
4=Agree
5=Strongly agree

Table 12

Radio Topics Proposed by Women Farmworkers

Topic	N	Percent
Unionization/Better Wages	25	41.00
Rights and Labor Laws	21	35.00
Social Services	21	35.00
Job Opportunities	18	30.00
Low Income Housing	12	20.00
Family/Marriage Education	11	18.00
Child Care Services	10	16.00
Work Related Health Problems	8	13.00
Adult Education	8	13.00

Ranked open ended responses

Appendix B

Women Farmworker Questionnaire

Questionnaire

We would like to stress that there are no right or wrong answers, only your opinions.

1. How old are you? Age _____

2. What is your religious preference? _____

3. What is your civil status?

1. single _____
2. married _____
3. divorced _____
5. widow _____
6. Other (specify) _____

4. Last grade completed in school:

1. Never attended school _____
2. Elementary 0-5 _____
3. 6-8 _____
4. 9-12 _____
5. 1-2 years of college _____
6. 2 years of college or more _____

5. How do you identify yourself?

1. Mexican _____
2. Chicana _____
3. Mexican American _____
4. Hispanic, Latin American, American _____
5. Anglo American _____
6. Other (specify) _____

6. If you consider yourself a Mexican, Chicano/Chicana, Mexican American, member of La Raza, or however you identify this group, how much pride do you have in this group.

1. Extremely proud _____
2. Moderately proud _____
3. Little pride _____
4. No pride-does not feel negative toward group _____

5. No pride but feels negative toward the group _____

7. Can you read Spanish? Yes _____ No _____
   Can you read English? Yes _____ No _____

8. Can you write English? Yes _____ No _____
   Can you write Spanish? Yes _____ No _____

9. Are you a member of any labor union for farmworkers?
   Yes _____ Union Name _____ No _____

10. Where were you born? Mexico _____ U.S. _____
    Other _____

11. Where were you raised?

    1. In Mexico only _____
    2. Mostly in Mexico, some in U.S. _____
    3. Equally in U.S. and Mexico _____
    4. Mostly in U.S. some in Mexico _____
    5. In U.S. only _____
    6. Other (Specify) _____

12. I want to remind you that your answers will be kept strictly confidential. The Immigration Department would not have access to this type of information.

    1) What is your residential status in the U.S.?

    1. Permanent resident (green card) _____
    2. Has working permit (SAW) _____
    3. Applied for the amnesty program _____
    4. Does not have documents to live in the U.S. _____
    5. Other (specify) _____

    2) Do you qualify for the amnesty program?
       Yes _____ No _____

    If yes, why didn't you applied? _____

13. Several Latin American and Mexican women farmworkers have expressed different reasons for coming to the U.S. In your case which of the following was your reason for coming to the U.S.

    1) The main reason you came to the U.S. was to work

    1 Strongly agree
    2 Agree
    3 Neutral
    4 Disagree

5 Strongly disagree

2) The main reason you came to the U.S. was to join your husband or partner?

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

3) The main reason you came to the U.S. was to join your family.

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

4) Other reason (specify) _____

5) Some women have also mentioned that due to other circumstances they had to leave their country. In your case, was there any special circumstance that force you to leave your country?
Yes _____ No _____

If yes, can you tell the reason or circumstance?
_____

14. At their arrival to this country people from Latin America and Mexico have stated that they have encountered different problems. To what extent do you think each of the following was a problem for you on your arrival?

1) For you at first not knowing how to speak English was:

1 Strongly agree this was a problem
2 Agree this was a problem
3 Neutral
4 Disagree this was a problem
5 Strongly disagree this was a problem

2) For you at first not knowing how to drive a car was:

1 Strongly agree this was a problem
2 Agree this was a problem
3 Neutral

4 Disagree this was a problem
5 Strongly disagree this was a problem

3) For you having no relatives living close to you was:

1 Strongly agree this was a problem
2 Agree this was a problem
3 Neutral
4 Disagree this was a problem
5 Strongly disagree this was a problem

4) For you not having information about available health centers in the community was:

1 Strongly agree this was a problem
2 Agree this was a problem
3 Neutral
4 Disagree this was a problem
5 Strongly disagree this was a problem

5) For you not having information about available social services in the community was:

1 Strongly agree this was a problem
2 Agree this was a problem
3 Neutral
4 Disagree this was a problem
5 Strongly disagree this was a problem

6) What other problems did you encounter when you first came to the U.S.?

---

15. New immigrants from Mexico and Latin America have done different things to deal with the problems of living in a new country. In your case how would you rate the following statements?

1) For you learning how to speak English when you first arrived in the U.S. was:

1 Very important
2 Important
3 Neutral
4 Not very important
5 not important

2) For you learning to drive a car when you first arrived in the U.S. was:

1 Very important

2 Important
3 Neutral
4 Not very important
5 not important

3) For you having relatives living close to you when you first came to the U.S. was:

1 Very important
2 Important
3 Neutral
4 Not very important
5 not important

4) For you seeking information about available health services in the community when you first came to the U.S. was:

1 Very important
2 Important
3 Neutral
4 Not very important
5 not important

5) For you seeking information on available social services in the community when you first came to the U.S. was:

1 Very important
2 Important
3 Neutral
4 Not very important
5 not important

16. What things have you done to adjust your life into a new culture?

_____

17. Of the following statements regarding agricultural work please indicate which statement represents best your work situation?

1. You work about 12-8 months in the fields _____
2. You work 7-5 months in the fields _____
3. You work 4-2 months in the fields _____
4. Other _____

18. What type of agricultural work you usually do?

a) Type of crops	b) Type of tasks
1. _____	1. _____

2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____

19. Do you perform any other type of work for pay?
Yes _____ No _____

20. Due to the temporary nature of farmwork, several families see the necessity to move to other areas. Do you move during the year to other agricultural areas?
Yes _____ how many times per year _____ No _____

21. Women farmworkers have encountered in the past several problems. To what extent do you think this is a problem for women today?

1) Women farmworkers work under very poor conditions:

1 Strongly agree that its an extreme problem
2 Agree that its a big problem
3 Neutral
4 Disagree that its a big problem
5 Strongly disagree that its a problem

2) Women farmworkers get a very low pay:

1 Strongly agree that its an extreme problem
2 Agree that its a big problem
3 Neutral
4 Disagree that its a big problem
5 Strongly disagree that its a problem

3) Women farmworkers live in houses/apartments that are in very poor conditions:

1 Strongly agree that its an extreme problem
2 Agree that its a big problem
3 Neutral
4 Disagree that its a big problem
5 Strongly disagree that its a problem

4) Women farmworkers have no health insurance:

1 Strongly agree that its an extreme problem
2 Agree that its a big problem
3 Neutral
4 Disagree that its a big problem
5 Strongly disagree that its a problem

5) Women farmworkers are not treated with respect by foremen:

1 Strongly agree that its an extreme problem
2 Agree that its a big problem
3 Neutral
4 Disagree that its a big problem
5 Strongly disagree that its a problem

6) What other problems do you think women farmworkers are facing today?

_____

22. Do you have a health insurance? Yes _____ No _____

23. Several solutions have been proposed to resolve the problems that women farmworkers are facing today. To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are important solutions to resolve the problems that women farmworkers face today?

1) A higher pay:

1 Strongly agree is very important
2 Agree is important
3 Neutral
4 Disagree is very important
5 Strongly disagree is important

2) Belonging to a farmworker's union:

1 Strongly agree is very important
2 Agree is important
3 Neutral
4 Disagree is very important
5 Strongly disagree is important

3) Better labor laws:

1 Strongly agree is very important
2 Agree is important
3 Neutral
4 Disagree is very important
5 Strongly disagree is important

4) What things do you think can be done to help solve the problems that women farmworkers face today?

_____

24. How do you consider the pay that you receive from working in the fields?

1 Very high

2 High
3 Adequate
4 Low
5 Very low

25. The house/apartment in which you are now living, how would rate its condition?

1 In excellent condition
2 Very good condition
3 In adequate condition
4 In poor condition
5 In very poor condition

26. Does your house/apartment has potable water?
Yes _____ No _____

27. Are you facing the following problem?

1) You have been asked to leave the building were you live?

Yes _____ Why? _____ No _____

28. What themes do you consider important to be presented in a radio program?

1. _____ 5. _____
2. _____ 6. _____
3. _____ 7. _____
4. _____ 8. _____

29. Lately, there has been a growing interest in the effects of pesticides use in agriculture. To what extent do you think the use of pesticides is bad for the health of farmworkers?

1 Strongly agree that its an extreme problem
2 Agree that neutral its a big problem
3 Neutral
4 Disagree its a big problem
5 Strongly disagree its a problem

30. It appears that the use of pesticides in the fields has affected some farmworkers. Have you had any health problem due to the use of pesticides in the fields were worked?
Yes _____ No _____

1. Miscarriage Yes _____ No _____
2. Poisoning Yes _____ No _____

3. Nausea Yes _____ No _____
4. Rash Yes _____ No _____
5. Vomiting Yes _____ No _____
6. Other (specify) _____

31. Some women farmworkers have reported that they were sprayed with pesticides while you were working in the fields. Have you been sprayed with pesticides while you were working in the fields?
Yes _____ How many times? _____ No _____

32. Do most of the fields were you work have toilets available for the workers? Yes _____ No _____

33. Have you acquired any infections in your private parts because you used the toilets in the fields?
Yes _____ No _____

34. Have you had any health/medical problem because of your work in the agricultural field? Yes _____ No _____
Type of problem: _____

35. Do you have any children? Yes _____ No _____
If yes how many _____ Their ages _____

36. Several women farmworkers have indicated that they have encountered several problems arranging for child care. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following has been a problem with you?

1) It has been hard for you to find a baby sitter that can work very early in the morning?

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

2) It has been hard for you to use child care centers because they do not provide services early in the morning?

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

3) You have not used private child care centers because they are too expensive?

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

4) Sometimes you had to take your children with you to the field?

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

5) Can you think of any other problems that you have encountered in arranging for children?

_____

37. Who takes care of your children most of the time?

1. Friend _____
2. Relative _____
3. Hired baby sitter _____
4. State nursery _____
5. Other (specify) _____

38. How much did you earned last year? $ _____

39. How much did your husband/partner earned last year? $ _____

40. How much was your total income for last year? $ _____

41. What is your husband's occupation? _____

42. Due to the seasonal nature of farmwork, some farmworkers need to supplement their income by applying for unemployment or welfare benefits. Do you usually apply for any of the following?

1. Unemployment: Yes _____ No _____
2. Food stamps Yes _____ No _____
3. AFDC Yes _____ No _____
4. Other (specify) _____

43. If you had a labor or work related problem who would you contact to help you with this problem?

Person _____ Agency _____

44. If you had a marital problem who would you approach to help you?

Person _____ Agency _____

45. If you had an emotional/psychological problem who would you ask for help?

Person _____ Agency _____

46. If you or one of your family members got sick where would you go?

Person_____ Agency _____

47. If you had a legal problem where would you go?

Person _____ Agency _____

48. In the past women farmworkers have reported that they are treated in an inferior way by the staff who work in health or social service centers. To what extent do you agree of disagree this is the case today?

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

49. Farmworker women sometimes they prefer to go to a private doctor because they feel humiliated seeking less costly/free medical services. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

50. Do you think people look down upon farmworkers who seek free/low cost medical services? To what extent do you agree or disagree?

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

51. Do you think people look down upon farmworkers who seek free/low cost legal services? To what extent do you agree or disagree?

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

52. Do you feel humiliated when you have to seek less costly/free medical or other type of services?

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

53. If you had a health problem and you had a choice, who would you prefer to see?

1) A male doctor _____ a women doctor _____
2) A Latin male doctor _____ a Latin women doctor _____
3) A Latin male doctor _____ an Anglo male doctor _____
4) An Anglo woman doctor_____ a Latin woman doctor _____
5) A Latin male doctor _____ an Anglo woman doctor_____

54. Some people believe that Latin and Mexicans are discriminated in the U.S.. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

55. To what extent do you agree or disagree that you personally have been discriminated against in the past?

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

If yes, can you describe what happened?

_____

56. To what extent do you consider gang activity problem in your neighborhood?

1 Strongly agree that its an extreme problem
2 Agree that its a big problem
3 Neutral
4 Disagree that its a big problem
5 Strongly disagree that its a problem

57. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following is sexual harassment?

1) Unwelcome and repeated sexual advances:

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

2) Unwelcome and repeated request for sexual favors:

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

3) Any physical or verbal conduct of a sexual nature:

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

58. Several women farmworkers have reported being sexually harassed by either a foremen or co-worker.

1) To what extent do you agree or disagree that sexual harassment is a big problem in the fields?

1 I Strongly agree that its an extreme problem
2 Agree that its a big problem
3 Neutral
4 Disagree that its a big problem
5 Strongly disagree that its a problem

2) For women, to talk about sexual harassment is a very difficult thing because women are usually blamed for what happens. In your past experience, have you been sexually harassed by either a foreman or co-worker?
Yes _____ No _____

What happened?

_____

What did you do about it?

_____

How do you feel about it?

_____

Did you inform any one?

_____

59. Some women farmworkers have indicated that their husbands help them in sharing the domestic work. In your case,

1. You do all the housework _____
2. Your partner does some of the housework _____
3. You and your partner equally share all the housework _____
4. Your partner does all the housework _____

60. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the housework should be divided equally among both partners?

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

61. To what extent do you agree or disagree that your partner should do all the housework?

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

62. To what extent do you agree or disagree that you should do all the housework?

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

63. Several women farmworkers have stated that decision making among couples sometimes is a joint effort. In

your case,

1. Your partner makes all the decisions _____
2. You share equally the decisions making _____
3. You make some of the decisions _____
4. You make more of the decisions _____

64. To what extent do you think that a couple should make most of the decisions together?

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

65. To what extent do you agree or disagree that your partner should make most of the decision?

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

66. To what extent do you agree or disagree that you should make most of the decisions?

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Neutral
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

67. To what extent do you think that wife abuse is a big problem in the farmworker community?

1 Strongly agree that its an extreme problem
2 Agree that its a big problem
3 Neutral
4 Disagree that its a big problem
5 Strongly disagree that its a problem

68. If a fairy appeared to you and would grant you three wishes. What three things would you ask?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

69. What would you like to see yourself doing in five years?

_____

70. What things would you need to achieve the above?

_____

72. What would you like your children to become?

_____

End of interview: Thank you once more for your cooperation and patience. Do you have any questions or comments?

Note: This questionnaire was developed by Maria Elena Lopez-Trevino. Copies of the Spanish version can be obtained at the Ofice of University Research, Institutional Review Board office of the university.

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CANDIDATE INFORMATION SHEET

Student	Maria Elena Lopez-Treviño	Name
	13007 East End	Address
	Chino, CA 91710	City, State, Zip
Code		
	August 1989	Date

Thesis Adviser	Pat Rozee-Koker, Ph.D.	Name
	PSYCHOLOGY	Department
Graduate Adviser	Sally J. Haralson, Ph.D.	

Typist	Barbara Dreyfuss-Briggs	Name
	2432 Creswell Lane	Address
	Costa Mesa, CA 92627	
	(714) 722-1604	Phone

Manual Used Billings, APA, Campbell

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